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THE STAIRWAY TO FAME

Up these stairs to the reception room of the greatest of French writers, men of note from all over the civilized world were proud to climb. Anatole France personified Fame. This picturesque entrance hall of his house in the Villa Saïd was the scene of thrilling anticipations for the mightiest figures of our age.

AT THE SIGN OF THE REINE PÉDAUQUE

BY ANATOLE FRANCE

A TRANSLATION BY MRS. WILFRID JACKSON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY WILLIAM J. LOCKE

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INTRODUCTION

HE novel of which the following pages are a translation was published in 1893, the author's forty-ninth year, and comes more or less midway in the chronological list of his works. It thus marks the flood tide of his genius, when his imaginative power at its brightest came into conjunction with the full ripeness of his scholarship. It is, perhaps, the most characteristic example of that elusive point of view which makes for the magic of Anatole France. No writer is more personal. No writer views human affairs from a more impersonal standpoint. He hovers over the world like a disembodied spirit, wise with the learning of all times and with the knowledge of all hearts that have beaten, yet not so serene and unfleshly as not to have preserved a certain tricksiness, a capacity for puckish laughter which echoes through his pages and haunts the ear when the covers of the book are closed. At the same time he appears unmistakably before you, in human guise, speaking to you face to face, in human tones. He will present tragic happenings consequent on the little follies, meannesses and passions of mankind with an emotionlessness which would be called delicate cruelty were the view point that of one of the sons of earth, but ceases to be so when the presenting hands are calm and immortal; and yet shining through all is the

man himself, loving and merciful, tender and warm.

The secret of this paradox lies in the dual temperament of the artist and the philosopher. One is ever amused by the riddle of life, dallies with it in his study, and seeks solutions scholarwise in the world of the past, knowing full well that all endeavours to pierce the veil are vanity, and that measured by the cosmic scale the frying of a St. Lawrence and the chilblain on a child's foot are equally insignificant occurrences. The other penetrated by the beauty and interest of the world is impelled by psychological law to transmit through the prism of his own individuality his impressions, his rare sense of relative values, his passionate conviction of the reality and importance of things. The result of the dual temperament is entertaining. What the artist, after infinite travail, has created, the easy philosopher laughs at. What the artist has set up as God, the philosopher flouts as Baal. In most men similarly endowed there has been conflict between the twin souls which has generally ended in the strangling of the artist; but in the case of Anatole France they have worked together in bewildering harmony. The philosopher has been mild, the artist unresentful. In amity therefore they have proclaimed their faith and their unfaith, their aspirations and their negations, their earnestness and their mockery. And since they must proclaim them in one single voice, the natural consequence, the resultant as it were of the two forces, has been a style in which beauty and irony are so subtly interfused as to make it perhaps the most alluring mode of expression in contemporary literature.

The personal note in Anatole France's novels is never more surely felt than when he himself, in

some disguise, is either the protagonist or the *raisonneur* of the drama. It is the personality of Monsieur Bergeret that sheds its sunset kindness over the sordid phases of French political and social life presented in the famous series. It is the charm of Sylvestre Bonnard that makes an idyll of the story of his crime. It is Doctor Trublet in *Histoire Comique* who gives humanity to the fantastic adventure. It is Maître Jérôme Coignard whom we love unreservedly in *La Rôtisserie de la Reine Pédauque*. And saving the respect due to Anatole France, Monsieur Bergeret, Sylvestre Bonnard, Doctor Trublet and Maître Jérôme Coignard are but protean manifestations of one and the same person. Of them all we cannot but love most Maître Jérôme Coignard. And the reason is plain. He is the only scapegrace of the lot. Even were he a layman we should call him a pretty scoundrel; but, priest that he is, we have no words wherein to summarise the measure of his fall from grace. He drinks, he brawls, he cheats at cards; he cannot pass a pretty girl on the stairs but his arm slips round her waist; to follow in Pandarus's foot-steps causes him no compunction; he "borrows" half a dozen bottles of wine from an inn, and runs away with his employer's diamonds. At first sight he appears to be an unconscionable villain. But endow him with the inexhaustible learning, the philosophy, the mansuetude, the wit of Monsieur Bergeret, imagine him a Sylvestre Bonnard qualified for the personal entourage of Pantagruel, and you have a totally different conception of his character. He becomes for you the *bon Maître* of Tournebroche, his pupil, a personage cast in heroic mould who, at all events, drank in life with great lungs and

died like a man and a Christian. Now there dwells in the heart of the mildest scholar a little demon of unrest whom academies may imprison but cannot kill. It is he who cries out for redemption from virtue and proclaims the glories of the sinful life. He whispers—of course mendaciously, for demons and truth are known to be sworn enemies—that there is mighty fine living in the world of toss-pots and trulls and rufflers, and having insidiously changed the good man's pen into a rapier, and his ink-pot into a quart measure, leads him forth on strange literary adventures.

On such an adventure has the scholar (at the same time mocking philospher and exquisite artist) gone in the *Rôtisserie de la Reine Pédauque*. He has gone in all lustiness, in a spaciousness of enjoyment granted only to the great imaginers, and vested in Maître Coignard's wine-stained cassock he comes to you with all the irresistible charm of his personality.

William J. Locke.

AT THE SIGN OF THE REINE PÉDAUQUE*

PREFACE

IT is my design to recount the singular chances of my life. Some of them have been strange and some beautiful. In bringing them to memory it is doubtful even to me whether I have not dreamt them. I once knew a Gascon cabalist, whom I cannot call wise for he perished very unhappily, who, however, one night, in the Isle of Swans, entranced me with his sublime discourse which I have been fortunate enough to keep in mind and careful to put in writing. His discourses treated of magic and the occult sciences which run so much in peoples' heads to-day. One hears of nothing but the Rosy-Cross.† For the matter of that I do not flatter myself that I shall gain much honour by these revelations. Some will say that I have invented it all, and that it is not the true doctrine; others, that I have only told what every one knew before. I allow that I am not very well grounded in the cabala, my master having perished at the beginning of my

* The original M.S. in a fine handwriting of the eighteenth century bore as sub-title: "The Life and Opinions of Abbé Jérôme Coignard." [A. France.]

† This was written during the latter half of the eighteenth century. [A. France.]

initiation. But the little that I did learn of his art made me very strongly suspect that it is all illusion, fraud, and vanity. Besides, it is enough for me to know that magic is contrary to religion for me to reject it with my whole heart. Nevertheless I think I ought to make myself clear on one point of his false science in order that I may not be thought more ignorant than I am. I know that cabalists in general think that sylphs, salamanders, elves, gnomes, and gnomides, are born with a soul as perishable as their bodies, and that they acquire immortality by commerce with the magi.* My cabalist taught me, on the contrary, that eternal life was the birthright of no creature, whether terrestrial or aerial. I have followed his opinion without pretending to judge of it.

He was in the habit of saying that elves kill those who reveal their mysteries, and he attributed to the vengeance of these sprites the death of Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, who was assassinated on the Lyons Road. But I well knew that his death, ever to be deplored, had a more natural cause. I shall speak freely of the genii of water and fire. One must needs run divers risks in life, and that from the sprites is small in the extreme.

I have jealously garnered the sayings of my good master, Monsieur l'Abbé Jérôme Coignard, who perished as I have just said. 'Twas a man full of wisdom and piety. Had he known more

*This opinion is notably sustained in a small book by Abbé Montfaucon de Villars, "The Comte de Gabalis, or Conversations on the Secret and Mysterious Sciences following the Principles of the Ancient Magi or Cabalistic Sages." There are several editions. I will content myself with citing one: (that published at Amsterdam by Jacques le Jeune, 1700, in 18 mo. illustrated) which contains a second part which is not in the original edition. [A. France.]

peace of soul he might have equalled Monsieur l'Abbé Rollin * in virtue as he far surpassed him in range of knowledge and depth of understanding. At least he had in the turmoil of a troubled life the advantage over Monsieur Rollin in that he did not fall into Jansenism. For the strength of his intelligence remained unshaken by any violence of rash doctrines, and I can bear witness before God to the purity of his faith. He had a great knowledge of the world, acquired by frequenting every-kind of company. This experience would have served him well in the history of Rome, which he would doubtless have composed after the style of Monsieur Rollin, had not time and leisure failed him, and if his way of life had better assorted with his genius. What I can relate of so excellent a man will be an ornament to my memoirs. Like Aulus Gellius who gives the finest passage of the philosophers in his Attic Nights, like Apuleius who puts in his Golden Ass the best fables of the Greeks, I undertake a bee-like industry and hope to gather the most exquisite honey. Nevertheless I cannot flatter myself to the point of thinking that I can emulate these two great authors, since it is only from the souvenirs of my own life and not from wide and varied reading that I draw all my riches. What I supply of my own material is my good faith. If ever any one is curious enough to read my memoirs he will recognise that only a simple soul could express itself in language so simple and coherent. I was always thought simple-minded in every company I have mixed in, and this work can but perpetuate this opinion after my death.

* *Rollin,* Charles. Abbé, Jansenist, historian, 1661–1741.

I

MY name is Elme-Laurent-Jacques Ménétrier. My father, Léonard Ménétrier, kept a cook-shop in the Rue Saint-Jacques at the sign of the Reine Pédauque, whose feet, as one knows, were webbed after the fashion of ducks and geese.

His gables rose over against *Saint-Benoît-le-Bétourné,* between Madame Gilles the draper at the sign of the *Trois Pucelles,* and Monsieur Blaizot the bookseller at the sign of the *Image of Saint Catherine,* and not far from the *Petit Bacchus,* whose railing, decorated with vine-branches, formed the corner of the Rue des Cordiers. He was very fond of me, and when I lay in my little bed after supper he would take my hand in his, and raising my fingers one after the other, beginning with the thumb, would say:

"This one killed it, this one plucked it, this one fried it, and this one ate it. And here's little Riquiqui, who gets nothing at all."

"Sauce, sauce, sauce," he would add, tickling the palm of my hand with the tip of my little finger.

And he laughed loudly. I laughed also till I fell asleep, and my mother vowed that the smile was still on my lips next morning.

My father was a good cook and feared God. That is why on feast-days he carried the banner of the cooks whereon was embroidered a beautiful St. Laurence with his gridiron and his golden palm. My father used to say to me:

"Jacquot, your mother is a saintly and worthy woman."

It was a speech he was fond of repeating. And in truth my mother went to church every Sunday carrying a book printed in large letters. For she could not read small print well, saying it dragged the eyes out of her head. My father passed an hour or two every evening at the inn, the *Petit Bacchus,* where Jeannette the viol player, and Catherine the lace-maker would also repair. And whenever he returned a little later than usual he would say in a softened voice as he donned his cotton night-cap, "Barbe, sleep in peace. As I told the lame cutler but a moment ago, you are a saintly and worthy woman."

I was six years of age when one day, readjusting his apron, always a sign in him of having come to a resolution, he spoke to me as follows:

"Miraut, our faithful dog, has turned my spit for fourteen years. I have nothing to say against him. He is a good servant who has never robbed me of the smallest morsel of turkey or goose, happy if, as reward for his work, he was allowed to lick the jack. But he is growing old. His paws are stiffening, he no longer sees, and he is of no use for turning the wheel. Jacquot, it is for you, my son, to take his place. With care and a little practice you will succeed as well as he."

Miraut heard these words and wagged his tail in sign of approval.

My father continued.

"Very well then, seated on this stool you will turn the spit. Nevertheless, so as to form your mind you can go over your catechism, and when, in consequence, you are able to read all the printed letters

you can learn by heart some book of grammar, or instruction, or yet again the admirable teachings of the Old and New Testament. For knowledge of God and of the distinction between good and evil, are necessary even in the practice of a routine such as mine, a condition of little standing, no doubt, but honest, and after all that of my father, and yet one day thine, please God."

From that day forward, seated from morning till evening in the chimney corner, I turned the spit, my catechism open on my knees. A good capuchin, who came bag in hand to beg of my father, helped me with my spelling. He did it all the more willingly for that my father, who respected knowledge, paid him for his lessons with a good slice of turkey and a big glass of wine, so that at length the little brother, seeing that I could put together syllables and words fairly well, brought me a beautiful life of St. Marguerite wherein he taught me to read with fluency.

One day, putting his wallet on the counter according to custom, he came and sat down near me, and warming his bare feet in the ashes on the hearth, he made me repeat for the hundredth time:

> Virgin wise and pure and fair
> Help a mother's pains to bear
> Have pity on us all.

At that moment a man, thick set but handsome, clad in ecclesiastical garb, came into the kitchen and cried in a big voice:

"Hello, mine host! Serve me with something good."

Under his grey hair he looked in the prime of life

and strength. His mouth laughed, his eyes sparkled. His rather heavy jowl and triple chin sloped with majesty on to his clerical bands, become, by sympathy no doubt, as greasy as the neck that overhung them. My father, courteous by profession, doffed his cap and said as he bowed:

"If your Reverence will warm himself at my fire I will serve him with what he requires."

Without any further pressing the Abbé took his place before the fire beside the capuchin.

Hearing the good brother read:

Virgin wise and pure and fair, &c.

he clapped his hands and said:

"Oh, what a rare bird! What an uncommon man! A capuchin who can read! What are you called, little brother?

"Brother Ange, an unworthy capuchin," answered my master.

My mother, who had heard voices from her room above, came down into the shop, drawn by curiosity.

The Abbé greeted her with a politeness that was already friendly, and said:

"Here is something to be admired, Madame, brother Ange is a capuchin, and he can read."

"He can read anything written," answered my mother.

And approaching the brother she recognised the hymn of St. Marguerite by the picture representing the virgin-martyr, holy-water sprinkler in hand.

"This hymn is difficult to read," she added, "because the words are quite small and are scarcely separated the one from the other. Happily, it

suffices, when in pain, to apply it as a poultice to the part that hurts the most, and it acts thus as well and even better than when recited. I have put it to the proof, Monsieur, at the birth of my son Jacquot, who is here present."

"Do not doubt it, my good Madame," said brother Ange. "The hymn to St. Marguerite is a sovereign remedy for what you say, on the express condition that alms be given to the capuchins."

With these words brother Ange emptied the goblet which my mother had filled to the brim for him, threw his wallet over his shoulder, and went off in the direction of the *Petit Bacchus*. My father served the Abbé with a portion of chicken, and he, drawing from his pocket a slice of bread, a flask of wine, and a knife whose copper handle represented the late king as a Roman emperor on an antique column, began his supper.

But he had barely put the first morsel of food in his mouth before he stopped and, turning to my father, asked for salt, appearing surprised that he had not been offered the salt-cellar before.

"It was customary," said he, "among the ancients to offer salt as a sign of hospitality. Moreover, they placed salt-cellars in the temples on the tables of the gods."

My father handed him grey salt in the wooden shoe which hung in the chimney corner. The Abbé took what he wanted and said:

"The ancients looked upon salt as a necessary seasoning for all meals, and they rated it so highly that they gave the metaphorical name of salt to all witticisms which add savour to conversation."

"Ah!" said my father, "however highly your

ancients may have held it, the salt tax of to-day puts a still higher price upon it."

My mother, who listened as she knitted a woollen stocking, was pleased to put in a word:

"One must believe salt is a good thing, for the priest puts a grain of it on the tongues of infants held at the baptismal font. When my Jacquot felt the salt on his tongue he pulled a face, for small as he was he was cunning. I am speaking, Monsieur l'Abbé, of my son Jacques, here present."

The Abbé looked at me and said:

"He is a big boy now. Modesty is depicted on his face, and he is reading the life of St. Marguerite attentively."

"Oh!" continued my mother, "he can read the prayer against chilblains and also the prayer of St. Hubert, both of which brother Ange has given him, and the history of him who was devoured in the *faubourg* Saint Marcel by several devils for having blasphemed the holy Name of God."

My father looked at me with admiration, then whispered in the Abbé's ear that I learnt all I wished with inborn and natural facility.

"Well, then, we must accustom him to good reading," replied the Abbé, "which is the ornament of man, a consolation in this life, and a remedy for all ills, even those of love, as the poet Theocritus affirms."

"Cook though I am I venerate knowledge," said my father, "and I am willing to believe that it is a cure for love as your worship says. But I do not think it is a cure for hunger."

"Perhaps it is not a universal panacea," answered the Abbé, "but it brings some solace with it, after

the manner of an exceeding sweet balm, imperfect though it may be."

As he was thus talking, Catherine the lace-maker appeared on the threshold, her cap over one ear, her fichu tumbled. At the sight of her my mother frowned and dropped three stitches of her knitting.

"Monsieur Ménétrier," said Catherine, "come and speak to the officers of the watch. If you don't they will take brother Ange off to prison without fault of his. The good brother came into the *Petit Bacchus* a moment ago and drank two or three pots of wine for which he did not pay, for fear, said he, of wanting in respect to the rule of St. Francis. But the worst part of the affair is that seeing me in the arbour with friends, he came up to me to teach me a new hymn. I told him it was not the right moment, but as he became insistent the lame cutler, who was close beside me, pulled him away by the beard. Then brother Ange flung himself on the cutler, who rolled on the ground pulling over the table and the jugs with him. The innkeeper rushed up on hearing the noise, and seeing the table overthrown, the wine spilt, and brother Ange, one foot on the cutler's head, brandishing a stool with which he hit all who came near him, this wicked landlord swore like a fiend, and fled to call the watch. Monsieur Ménétrier, come without delay, come and rescue the little brother from the hands of the officers! He is a holy man and there is excuse to be made for him in this matter."

My father was inclined to be obliging to Catherine. Nevertheless this time the lace-maker's words did not produce the effect she expected. He replied sharply that he saw no excuse for the capuchin, and that he hoped he would be well punished with

bread and water in the blackest dungeon-cell of the convent whose shame and disgrace he seemed to be.

He became heated as he spoke:

"A drunkard and a debauchee to whom I give good wine and good cheer daily, and who goes off to the pot-house to wanton with trollops who are abandoned enough to prefer the society of a peddling cutler and a capuchin to that of honest tradesmen of the neighbourhood. Fie!"

He stopped short at this part of his invective and looked stealthily at my mother, who, standing stiff and straight by the staircase, was knitting with short, sharp jerks of her needles.

Catherine, surprised at this bad reception, said drily:

"So you won't speak a good word for him to the innkeeper and the guard?"

"If you like I will tell them to take the cutler with the capuchin."

"But," she said laughing, "the cutler is your friend."

"More your friend than mine," said my father irritably. "A beggar who tugs at a strap and limps."

"Oh, as to that it is quite true that he limps, he limps, he limps." And she left the cook-shop bursting with laughter.

My father turned to the Abbé who was scraping a bone with his knife, "As I have had the honour to explain to your worship, every lesson in reading and writing that this capuchin gives to my child I have paid for in goblets of wine and succulent slices of hare, rabbit, goose, nay even of woodcock and capon. He is a drunkard and a debauchee."

"No doubt about that," replied the Abbé.

"But if he dare put foot in my house again I will drive him out with a broom-handle."

"That would be quite right," said the Abbé. "This capuchin is a donkey, and he would teach your son to bray rather than to talk. You will do well to throw into the fire his life of St. Marguerite, his prayer against chilblains, and the story of the were-wolf with which the frowsy monk poisons the child's mind. At the price brother Ange got for his lessons I will give you mine. I will teach the child Latin and Greek, French too, which Voiture * and Balzac † have so perfected. Thus by a two-fold good fortune, for it is both rare and beneficent, Jacquot Tournebroche shall become learned, and I shall have a meal every day."

"Done," said my faher, "Barbe, bring two goblets. There is no business settled when the parties have not touched glasses in sign of agreement. We will drink here. I never want to set foot in the *Petit Bacchus* again, the cutler and this monk have filled me with such disgust."

The Abbé got up and placing his hands on the back of his chair said slowly and gravely:

"Before all I thank God—Creator and Preserver of all good things for having led me to this fostering household. It is He alone who guides us, and we should acknowledge His providence in human affairs, though it may be rash and at times incongruous to obey it too blindly. For being universal His providence is to be encountered in all sorts of cases, sublime assuredly, by reason of God's part in them, but obscene or ridiculous for the part played in them by men which is the only side they

* *Voiture,* Vincent. Academician, 1598–1648.
† *Balzac,* J. L. G. de. Writer and orator, 1594–1654.

show us. So we must not, like monks and old women, invoke the finger of God every time the cat jumps. Praise God, and beseech Him to enlighten me in the teaching which I shall give this child, and, for the rest, let us recline ourselves on His holy Will, without seeking to understand Him in everything."

Then raising his glass he drank a great gulp of wine.

"This wine induces a soft and salutary heat in the workings of the human body," said he. "It is a liquor worthy of celebration at Teos and in the Temple by the princes of bacchic song, Anacreon and Chaulieu.* It must touch the lips of my youthful disciple."

He put the beaker to my chin and cried:

"Come, O bees of Academe, and light in harmonious swarm on the lips, henceforth sacred to the Muses, of Jacobus Tournebroche."

But my mother said, "O Monsieur l'Abbé, it is true that wine will draw bees, more particularly when it is sweet wine. But you must not wish those evil insects to light on the lips of my Jacquot, for their sting is cruel. One day when biting into a peach I was stung on the tongue by a bee, and I suffered the torments of the damned. And nothing eased me till brother Ange put in my mouth a pinch of earth moistened with saliva while he repeated the prayer to St. Cosmas."

The Abbé made her understand that he spoke of bees in an allegorical sense. And my father said to her in a tone of reproach:

"Barbe, you are a saintly and worthy woman,

* *Chaulieu,* Guillaume de. Abbé, poet, 1639–1720, surnamed "l'Anacréon du Temple."

but I have often remarked that you have an annoying fondness for plunging headlong into serious conversation, like a dog into a bowling-alley."

"May be," replied my mother, "but if you had paid more attention to my advice, Léonard, you would be better off. I can't be expected to know all the different kinds of bees, but I know about the conduct of a household, and what is due behaviour in a man of certain age, who is father of a family, and banner-bearer in his confraternity."

My father scratched his ear, and poured more wine for the Abbé, who said, sighing:

"Certes, knowledge is no longer honoured in our day, in the kingdom of France, as it was among the Romans when, though fallen from their pristine virtues, rhetoric raised Eugenius * to the purple. It is no rare thing in our time to see an able man in a garret without fire or light. *Exemplum ut talpa.* I am an example."

He then gave us an account of his life, which I will report to you as it came from his lips, saving where in places my tender years hindered me from understanding it plainly, and consequently from retaining it in my memory. And I believe that I have been able to fill up such gaps from the confidences he made me later, when he honoured me with his friendship.

* *Eugenius.* Eugenius of Gaul. Rhetorician, proclaimed emperor A.D. 392.

II

" UCH as you see me," he said, "or, to put it better, such as you do not see me, young, lithe, bright-eyed and black-haired, I taught the liberal arts in the college of Beauvais under Messieurs Dugué, Guérin, Coffin,* and Baffier. I had taken orders, and I thought to make myself a great reputation in letters. But a woman overthrew my hopes. She was one Nicole Pigoreau, and she kept a bookshop at the sign of the *Bible d'Or,* on the *place* in front of the college. I was in the habit of going there, for ever turning over the books she received from Holland, and also those bi-pontic † editions furnished with notes, glosses, and learned commentaries. I was a pleasing youth, and, to my misfortune, Madame Pigoreau recognised it. She had been pretty, and could still attract. Her eyes could speak. One day Cicero and Titus Livius, Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides, Polybius, Varro, Epictetus, Seneca, Boethius, Cassiodorus, Homer, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Plautus, Terence, Diodorus Siculus,‡ Dionysius of Halicarnassus.‖ St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil, St. Jerome and St. Au-

* *Coffin,* Charles. He succeeded Rollin as principal of College of Beauvais, 1676–1749.

† *Viz.,* published at Zweibrücken.

‡ *Diodorus Siculus.* Greek historian of Augustan age.

‖ *Dionysius of Halicarnassus.* Greek historian, b. 54 B.C.

gustine, Erasmus, Salmasius, Turnebus,* Scaliger,† St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, Bossuet with Ferri ‡ in his train, Lenain,‖ Godefroy,§ Mezéray,¶ Maimbourg,** Fabricius,†† Father Lelong,‡‡ and Father Pitou,‖‖ all the poets, all the orators, all the historians, all the fathers, all the doctors, all the theologians, all the humanists, all the compilers, sitting assembled on the walls from ceiling to floor, witnessed our embraces.

" 'You are irresistible,' she said. 'Do not think too badly of me.'

"She avowed her love in raptures inconceivable. One day she made me try on some bands and ruffles of lace, and finding they suited me to perfection, she begged me to keep them. I did not want to do so at all. But as she seemed irritated at my refusal, wherein she saw a slight to her love, I consented to take what she offered me for fear of offending her.

"My happiness lasted until I was replaced by an officer. I was filled with anger and spite, and hot for vengeance, I made it known to the governors of

* *Turnebus,* Adrien Tournèbe, known as Turnebus. Erudite writer of the Renaissance, b. at Les Andelys, 1512–1565.

† *Scaliger,* Julius Cæsar. Author of "De Arte Poetica," 1484–1558.

‡ *Ferri* (or Ferry), Paul. Protestant theologian, b. Metz, 1591–1669.

‖ *Lenain,* Pierre. Religious writer, b. Paris, 1640.

§ *Godefroy,* Denys. (*Corpus Juris Civilis.*) Lawyer, 1549–1621.

¶ *Mezéray,* François de. Historian, 1610–1683.

** *Maimbourg,* Père Louis. Jesuit historian, 1610–1686.

†† *Fabricius,* Johann Albrecht. Protestant theologian, 1668–1736.

‡‡ *Lelong,* Père. Translator of a history of Tartary printed in Paris 1529.

‖‖ *Pitou* (or Pithou), Pierre. He participated in the "Satire Ménippée," a publication antagonistic to "The League," 1539–1596.

the college that I no longer repaired to the *Bible d'Or* lest I should see there sights likely to offend the modesty of a young cleric. Truth to tell, I had no need to congratulate myself on this trick. For Madame Pigoreau, hearing of my behaviour in regard to her, told every one that I had stolen from her some lace bands and ruffles. Her false accusation came to the ears of the governors, who had my box searched, and there they found the set, which was sufficiently valuable. They turned me out, and thus I learnt, after the fashion of Hippolytus * and Bellerophon, † the wiles and wickedness of woman. Finding myself in the street, with my clothes and oratorical text-books, I ran great risk of dying of hunger there when, abandoning my clerical collar, I offered myself to a Huguenot gentleman, who took me as secretary, and dictated to me his pamphlets against religion."

"Ah! there you did wrong," cried my father. "That was bad, Monsieur l'Abbé! An honest man should never lend a hand to such abominations. And for my part, ignorant as I am, and a mere workman, I cannot endure any taint of Colas's cow." ‡

"You are right, mine host," replied the Abbé. " 'Tis the worst passage in my life, and the one that I repent the most. But my man was a Calvinist; he only employed me to write against the Lutherans

* *Hippolytus.* Son of Theseus, falsely accused by his stepmother, Phædra.

† *Bellerophon.* Falsely accused at the court of Prœtus, King of Argos, by the Queen, Antæa.

‡ *Colas's Cow.* "Il est de la vache à Colas" signified "he is a Huguenot." A strayed cow belonging to a peasant named Colas was ill-treated by a Huguenot neighbour. From this absurd squabble sprang popular riots and songs thereon.

and the Socinians,* whom he could not endure; and I assure you that he made me treat these heretics more hardly than the Sorbonne has ever done."

"Amen!" said my father. "Lambs feed in peace while the wolves devour one another."

The Abbé continued his recital:

"For the matter of that I did not remain long with that gentleman, who set more store on the letters of Ulrich von Hutten † than on the orations of Demosthenes, and in whose house one drank but water. After that I tried various trades, none of which succeeded with me. I was successively pedlar, comedian, monk, and varlet. Then, donning my bands again, I became secretary to the bishop of Séez, and edited the catalogue of precious MSS. shut away in his library. The catalogue forms two volumes, in folio, which he has placed in his collection, gilt-edged, and bound in red morocco bearing his arms. I venture to say it is a good piece of work.

"It rested entirely with me whether I should grow old in the service of Monseigneur in study and in peace. But I loved a chambermaid in the steward's ‡ household. Do not be too hard on me. Dark-skinned, full of life, fresh and plump, St. Pachomius himself must have loved her. One day she took coach, and went to seek her fortune in Paris. I followed her there, but I did not do as well for myself as she did. On her recommendation I entered the service of Madame de St. Ernest,

* *Socinians.* The followers of Lælius Socinus (Lelio Sozzini), a celebrated heresiarch, whose teaching was anti-trinitarian, 1525–1562.

† *Ulrich von Hutten.* Reformer in Germany, 1488–1523.

‡ *Pachomius.* Anchorite of the 4th century, the founder of the Cœnobites of Egypt. For a picture of their life see *Thaïs* by Anatole France.

a dancer at the Opera, who, knowing my particular talent, ordered me to write, under her prompting, a lampoon against Mademoiselle Davilliers, against whom she had a grudge. I was a good secretary, and well did I merit the fifty *écus* which had been promised me. The book was printed at Amsterdam by Marc-Michel Rey, with an allegorical frontispiece, and Mademoiselle Davilliers received the first copy at the very moment when she was going on the stage to sing the principal air in *Armide*. Rage made her voice hoarse and uncertain. She sang out of tune, and was hissed. Her part played, she ran in her powder and panniers to the stage-manager, who could refuse her nothing. She flung herself at his feet in tears, and cried for vengeance. It was soon known that the stab came from Madame de St. Ernest.

"Questioned, pressed, menaced, she denounced me, and I was thrown into the Bastille, where I lay four years. I found some consolation in reading Boethius and Cassiodorus.

"Since then I have kept a public writer's stall at the cemetery of the Holy Innocents, and have put at the disposal of amorous servant-girls a pen which should rather paint the illustrious men of Rome, or annotate the writings of the Fathers. I make two *liards* for a love-letter, and it is a trade by which I die rather than live. But I do not forget that Epictetus was a slave and Pyrrho a gardener.

"A moment ago, by great luck, I got an *écu* for an anonymous letter. It was two days since I had eaten anything. So I promptly went in search of an eating-house. I saw from the street your illuminated sign, and the fire of your hearth, which flickered joyously on the pane. I smelt a delicious

odour on the threshold. I entered. My good host, you know my life."

"I perceive it is that of an honest man," said my father, "and excepting the matter of Colas's cow, there is nothing much to take amiss. Your hand. We are friends. What is your name?"

"Jérôme Coignard, doctor of theology, and bachelor of arts."

III

HE wonderful thing in human affairs is the linking together of effects and causes. Monsieur Jérôme Coignard might well say so: when we come to consider the strange succession of incident and consequence wherein our destinies clash, we are bound to recognise that God in His perfection is not wanting in wit nor fancy, nor in the comic spirit, but, on the contrary, that He excels in imbroglio as in all else, and that after having inspired Moses, David, and the Prophets, He had deigned to inspire Monsieur Le Sage and the playwrights of the booth. He could have dictated to them some very diverting harlequinades. Thus, for instance, I became a Latinist because brother Ange was taken by the guard and put in the ecclesiastical prison for having knocked down a cutler in the arbour of the *Petit Bacchus*. Monsieur Jérôme Coignard fulfilled his promise. He gave me lessons, and finding me docile and intelligent, he took pleasure in teaching me ancient literature. In a few years he made me a fairly good Latinist.

I cherish his memory with a gratitude which will only end with my life. The obligation he laid me under may be conceived when I say that he left nothing undone that might help to shape my affections and my soul along with my intelligence. He would repeat to me the Maxims of Epictetus, the Homilies of St. Basil, and Boethius,—his consola-

tions. He exhibited to me, in many a fine passage, the philosophy of the Stoics; but he only displayed it in its sublimity to abase it the lower before the philosophy of the Christian. His faith remained intact above the ruins of his fondest illusions and of his most rightful hopes. His weaknesses, his mistakes, and his faults—and he did not try to conceal them nor to lend them colouring—had not shaken his trust in Divine goodness. And to understand him well you must realise that he had care of his eternal welfare on occasions when he seemed apparently to care the least for it. He inculcated in me principles of enlightened piety. He exerted himself to apprentice me to virtue—to make it, so to speak, homely and familiar to me by examples drawn from the life of Zeno.*

That I might learn of the dangers of vice he drew his arguments from a source nearer to hand, confiding to me that, through having loved wine and women over much, he had had to renounce the honour of being raised to a collegiate chair, the long robe, the doctor's cap.

To these exceptional merits he joined a constancy and an assiduity, and he gave his lessons with a punctuality that one would not have expected from a man given up, as he was, to every caprice of a wandering life, and driven about incessantly by the stresses of an existence less dignified than picaresque. This zeal was the result of his kind-heartedness, and emanated also from the liking he had for our worthy street, the Rue St. Jacques, where he found the wherewithal to satisfy at once the desires of body and mind. Having given me some profit-

* *Zeno.* Founder of the Stoic philosophy, died B.C. 264.

able lesson while enjoying a succulent dinner, he would go the round of the *Petit Bacchus* and of the *Image of St. Catherine,* finding thus united in the little corner of earth, which was his Paradise, good wine and books.

He had become an assidous visitor of Monsieur Blaizot the bookseller, who always welcomed him, notwithstanding that he turned over all the books without ever buying one. And it was a wonderful sight to see my master at the back of the shop, his nose poked into some little books new come from Holland, raising his head to hold forth according to the occasion with the same smiling and overflowing knowledge, whether concerning the plans for universal monarchy attributed to the late king, or the amorous adventures of a financier and an actress. Monsieur Blaizot never tired of listening to him. This Monsieur Blaizot was a little dry old man, neat in his person, in maroon coat and breeches and grey worsted stockings. I admired him immensely, and I could think of nothing more delightful in the world than to sell books as he did at the *Image of St. Catherine.*

A certain memory helped to indue Monsieur Blaizot's shop for me with a mysterious charm. It was there that when very young I saw, for the first time, a woman unclothed. I see her still. It was Eve, in a pictured Bible. She had a round stomach and rather short legs, and she was conversing with the serpent in a Dutch landscape. The possessor of this print inspired me thenceforward with a consideration which showed no falling off when, thanks to Monsieur Coignard, I acquired the taste for books.

By the time I was sixteen I knew a good deal of Latin and a little Greek. Said my good master to my father:

"Do you not think, mine host, that it is improper that a young Ciceronian should still wear the clothes of a scullion?"

"I hadn't thought about it," answered my father.

"It is very true," said my mother, "our son should have a dimity coat. He is pleasing in his appearance, he has good manners, and is well taught. He will do honour to his clothes."

My father remained thoughtful for a minute, and then asked, would a dimity coat look well on a cook? But Abbé Coignard represented to him that, fostered by the Muses, I could never become a cook, and that the time was near when I should wear the clerical bands.

My father sighed when he thought that I should never, when he had gone, carry the banner of the Parisian Confraternity of Cooks.

And my mother's eyes ran over with pride and joy at the thought of her son in the church.

The first effect of my dimity coat was to give me self-confidence and to encourage me to get a more exact notion of women than that given me once on a time by Monsieur Blaizot's Eve. I thought, not unreasonably for the purpose, of Jeannette the viol-player, and Catherine the lace-maker, whom I saw pass the cook-shop twenty times a day, showing in wet weather a slim ankle and a little foot, whose point skipped from paving-stone to stone. Jeannette was not as pretty as Catherine, neither was she so young nor so smart in her attire. She was a Savoyard, and dressed her head *en marmotte* with a checked kerchief which hid her hair. But it must

be said for her that she put on no airs and graces, and understood what was wanted of her even before one spoke. This quality suited my bashfulness down to the ground. One night in the porch of St. Benoît-le-Bétourné, which is furnished with stone seats, she taught me what I did not know as yet, and what she had known for long enough. But I was not as grateful for it as I ought to have been, and I only longed to bring to the service of others who were prettier the knowledge she had instilled into me. I must say, as an excuse for my ingratitude, that Jeannette the viol-player put no greater price on her lessons than I myself had paid; and she was prodigal of her favours to every scamp in the neighbourhood.

Catherine had more reserve in her ways. I was much afraid of her, and did not dare tell her how pretty I thought her. What made me doubly shy was that she made fun of me continually, and lost no occasion to tease me. She made game of me on account of my smooth chin. I blushed for it, and wished the earth would cover me. I assumed a dark and aggrieved air when I met her. I pretended to despise her, but truth to tell, she was far too pretty for any such despite.

IV

HAT night, the night of the Epiphany and the nineteenth anniversary of my birth, while the heavens shed along with the melted snow a relentless cold which pierced one to the bone, and an icy wind set the sign of the *Reine Pédauque* creaking, a clear fire, scented with goose-fat, blazed in the cook-shop, and the soup-bowl smoked on the cloth round which were seated Monsieur Jérôme Coignard, my father and myself. My mother, as her habit was, was standing behind the master of the house, ready to serve.

He had already filled the Abbé's basin when, the door opening, we saw brother Ange, very pale, his nose red and his beard dripping. In his surprise my father raised his soup-ladle nearly up to the smoked beams of the ceiling.

My father's surprise was easily explained. Brother Ange who once before had disappeared for six months after knocking down the lame cutler, had this time stayed away two whole years without anything having been heard of him. He had gone away one spring with a donkey laden with relics, and the worst of the matter was that he had taken Catherine along with him, dressed as a nun. It was not known what had become of them, but there had been rumours at the *Petit Bacchus* that the little brother and the little sister had come in conflict with the authorities between Tours and Orleans.

Without counting that one of the *vicaires* of St. Benoît declared with much outcry that this gallows-thief of a capuchin had stolen his donkey.

"What," exclaimed my father, "isn't this rascal in the deepest of dungeons? Then there is no longer justice in the kingdom." But brother Ange repeated the *Benedicite* and made the sign of the Cross over the bowl of soup.

"Hello there!" my father went on. "A truce to your grimaces, my fine monk! And now confess that you have spent in prison at least one of the two years that haven't seen your Beelzebub's face in the parish. The Rue St. Jacques was the honester for it, and the whole quarter more respectable. Look at him, the shameless fellow, who leads astray his neighbour's donkey and every man's hack!"

"Perhaps," replied brother Ange, his eyes downcast and his hands in his sleeves, "perhaps, Maître Léonard, you wish to refer to Catherine, whom I had the happiness to convert and to turn to a better life. So much so that she ardently longed to follow me along with the relics that I bore, and to accompany me on blessed pilgrimages to the Black Virgin of Chartres? I agreed on condition that she should don a religious habit. Which she did without a murmur."

"Hold your tongue," said my father, "you are a deboshed rogue. You have no respect for your cloth. Go back whence you came, and go and look if you like, out in the street, whether the *Reine Pédauque* has any chilblains."

But my mother signed to the brother to sit down in the chimney corner, which he quietly did.

"We must forgive much to capuchins, for they sin without malice," said the Abbé.

My father begged Monsieur Coignard to talk no more of the brood, for their very name sent the blood to his head.

"Maître Léonard," said the Abbé, "philosophy is conducive to clemency. For my part I freely absolve ragamuffins, rogues and all wretched people. And I bear no ill-will even to the wealthy, though in their case there is much frowardness. And if you had mixed as I have done with people of repute, Maître Léonard, you would know they are worth no more than others, and that they are often less agreeable to meet. When I was with the bishop of Séez I sat at the third table, and two attendants clad in black stood at my elbow: Constraint and Ennui."

"It must be owned," said my mother, "that Monseigneur's valets bore tiresome names. Why didn't they call them Champagne, Olive, or Frontin,* according to custom?"

The Abbé continued:

"It is true that certain people easily accommodate themselves to the drawbacks of living among the great. At the second table of the bishop of Séez sat a certain Canon, a very polite man, who remained on a formal footing until the day of his death. Learning that he was extremely ill Monseigneur went to see him in his extremity. 'Alas,' said the Canon, 'I ask pardon of your lordship for unavoidably dying in your presence.' 'Go on, go on, do not mind me,' replied Monseigneur kindly."

At this moment my mother brought in the roast, which she placed on the table with a gesture so imbued with homely gravity that my father was quite

* *Frontin.* A personage "de l'ancienne comédie—valet effronté."

moved, and cried out brusquely, his mouth full:

"Barbe, you are a saintly and worthy woman."

"Madame," said my good master, "is indeed comparable to the virtuous woman of Holy Writ. She is a spouse such as God loves."

"Thanks be to God," replied my mother, "I have never failed in the fidelity I swore to my husband Léonard Menétrier and now that the worst is over assuredly I reckon on not failing in it until the hour of my death. I only wish that he had been as faithful to me as I to him."

"Madame, I knew at first sight that you were a good woman," the Abbé ran on, "for I feel in your presence a peace which is more of Heaven than earth."

My mother, who was simple but not foolish, well understood what he meant, and answered that had he but known her twenty years before he would have found her very different from what she had become in this cook-shop where her good looks had been lost under the fiery heat of the spit and the steam from the smoking bowls. And now, being roused, she related how the baker at Auneau found her sufficiently to his taste to offer her cakes every time she passed his bakehouse. She added, with spirit, that for the matter of that there is neither maid nor woman so ugly but that she can do wrong if the fancy take her.

"The good woman is right," said my father; "I remember when I was apprenticed at the cook-shop of the *Oie Royale,* near the gate of St. Denis, my master, who was in those days banner-bearer to the confraternity, as I am now, saying to me: 'I shall never be cuckold, my wife is too ugly.' This speech gave me the notion of doing what he

thought impossible. I succeeded at the first attempt, one morning when he was at La Vallée. He spoke truth: his wife was very plain, but not without wit, and she was not without gratitude."

At this anecdote my mother lost her temper altogether, saying that that was not the kind of talk a father of a family should indulge in with his wife and son should he wish to keep their respect. Monsieur Jérôme Coignard seeing her quite red with anger, turned the conversation with adroit kindliness, suddenly questioning brother Ange who, his hands in his sleeves, was sitting humbly in the kitchen corner:

"Little brother," said he, "what relics did you and Catherine carry on the *vicaire's* donkey? It was your breeches, wasn't it, you gave to the devotees to kiss, like the Franciscan in the tale told by Henry Estienne?" *

"Ah, Monsieur l'Abbé," replied brother Ange with the air of a martyr suffering for the truth, "it was not my breeches but a foot of St. Eustatius."

"I would have sworn it, were swearing not a sin," cried the Abbé waving a drumstick. "These capuchins ferret you out saints that good writers of church history know nothing of. Neither Tillemont † nor Fleury ‡ mention this St. Eustatius, to whom it was exceedingly wrong to dedicate a church in Paris, when there are so many saints, acknowledged by writers worthy of belief, who still await such an honour. The life of this Eustatius is a tissue of ridiculous fables. The same may be said of that of St. Catherine, who never existed save in the

* *Estienne,* Henri. Lexicographer, 1531–1598.
† *Tillemont,* Le Nain de. Historian, b. Paris, 1637–1698.
‡ *Fleury,* Claude. Ecclesiastical historian, 1640–1723.

imagination of some malicious Byzantine monk. I will not be too severe upon her though, for she is the patron saint of writers and serves for a sign at good Monsieur Blaizot's shop, which is the most delectable spot in the world."

"I had also," went on the little brother imperturbably, "a rib of St. Mary of Egypt."

"Oh! oh! as to her," cried the Abbé, throwing his bone across the room, "I rate her as a great saint, for in her life she gave a beautiful example of humility! You know, Madame," he answered, pulling my mother by the sleeve, "that St. Mary of Egypt making a pilgrimage to the tomb of our Saviour was stopped by a deep river, and not having a farthing wherewith to pay the ferry-boat, she offerred her body in payment to the boatman. What do you say to that, my good lady?"

My mother first asked whether the story was really true. When she was assured that it was printed in books and painted on a window in the church of La Jussienne, she held it for true. "I think," said she, "that one would needs be as great a saint as she to do as much without sinning. As for me, I would not risk it." "For my part," said the Abbé, "in accordance with the more subtle theologians, I approve the conduct of this saint. She is a lesson to honest women who entrench themselves too overweeningly in the height of their virtue. There is a certain sensuality when one thinks about it in putting such a very high price on the flesh, and in guarding with such exceeding care what one ought to disdain. One sees matrons who think they have in themselves a treasure to protect, and who visibly exaggerate the interest taken in their person by God and the angels. They believe them-

selves a sort of natural Blessed Sacrament. St. Mary of Egypt knew better. Although pretty and ravishingly well-made, she judged that there would be too much pride of the flesh in stopping on her blessed pilgrimage for a thing indifferent in itself, and which, far from being a precious jewel, is but an occasion for mortification. She suffered mortification, Madame, and in this manner with admirable humility she entered on the path of penitence, where she accomplished marvellous things."

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said my mother, "I fail to understand you. You are too learned for me."

"This great saint," said brother Ange, "is painted life-size in my convent chapel, and all her body is covered, by God's grace, with long, thick hair. Copies of it are made, and I will bring you one which has been blessed, my good lady."

My mother, touched, passed him the soup-bowl behind the master's back. And the good brother sitting over the ashes, dipped his beard in the savoury-smelling soup.

"Now is the time," said my father, "to uncork one of those bottles which I hold in reserve for great feast-days such as Christmas, Twelfth Night, and the feast of St. Lawrence; * nothing is more pleasing than to drink good wine when one is quietly at home, sheltered from all intruders."

He had scarcely pronounced these words when the door opened and a big man invaded the cook-shop in a squall of wind and snow. "A Salamander! a Salamander!" he cried, and without taking notice of any one, he leant over the hearth and

* *Feast of St. Lawrence.* L'église St. Laurent in Paris had a popular *fête,* but the *foire* held against the church walls was still more celebrated.

stirred the fire with his stick, to the great annoyance of brother Ange who, swallowing cinders and smuts in his soup, coughed till he nearly gave up the ghost. And the big man stirred the fire again, crying "A Salamander!—I see a Salamander!" till the troubled flame made his shadow waver on the ceiling in the shape of some great bird of prey.

My father was surprised, nay even shocked, at the ways of this visitor. But he knew how to control himself. He got up, his napkin under his arm, and approaching the chimney-corner he bent over the hearth, his hands on his hips.

When he had sufficiently considered his fire all scattered and brother Ange covered with ash:

"If your lordship will pardon me," he said, "I see but a sinful monk and no Salamander."

"And after all I do not regret it," my father added. "For from all I have heard, it is an ugly beast, hairy and horned and with great claws."

"What a mistake!" replied the dark man. "Salamanders are like women, or rather, like Nymphs, for they are of a perfect beauty. But it was silly of me to ask if you could see this one. One must be a philosopher to see a Salamander and I should scarcely think that there are any philosophers in this kitchen."

"Possibly you are mistaken," said Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard. "I am a doctor of theology and master of arts; I have studied to some extent the Greek and Latin moralists, whose maxims have fortified my soul in the vicissitudes of my life, and particularly have I applied Boethius as a local application for the evils of existence. And behold by my side Jacobus Tournebroche, my pupil, who knows by heart the Aphorisms of Publius Syrus."

The unknown turned on the Abbé his yellow eyes, which shone strangely over his eagle nose, and excused himself with more politeness than his fierce looks gave promise of, not having immediately recognised a person of his merit.

"It is extremely probable," he added, "that this Salamander has come for you or for your pupil. I saw her very plainly from the street, when passing the shop. She would have been more apparent if the fire had been brighter. That is why one should stir the fire vigorously when one thinks there is a Salamander in the chimney."

At the first movement that the unknown made to stir the coals, brother Ange, in his anxiety, covered his soup with a corner of his robe and shut his eyes.

"Monsieur," pursued the Salamander-seeking gentleman, "allow your pupil to approach the hearth, and tell us if he cannot see some resemblance to a woman above the flames."

Just then, the smoke which went up under the hood of the chimney curled into a marked grace, making curves which might have been said to simulate a sinuous body had one's attention been on the strain. I was not altogether fibbing therefore when I said that I could, perhaps, see something.

I had scarcely said so when the unknown, raising his abnormally long arm, struck me on the shoulder so roughly with his fist that I thought he must have broken my collar-bone.

Thereon, in a very gentle voice, he said, looking in the meanwhile with a benevolent air: "My child, it was necessary to make this strong impression on you that you may never forget that you have seen a Salamander. 'Tis a sign that you are destined to become a learned man, perhaps a Mage.

Your face, moreover, augurs well for your intelligence,"

"Monsieur," said my mother, "he has all the learning that he wishes, and please God he will yet be an Abbé."

Monsieur Jérôme Coignard added that I had drawn some profit from his lessons, and my father asked the stranger if he would not have something to eat.

"I have no need to eat," said the man, "and it is easy for me to go for a year and even more without food, with the exception of a certain elixir, whose composition is known only to the philosophers. This faculty is not peculiar to me. It is common to all the elect, and we know that the illustrious Cardan abstained from all food for several years without being inconvenienced. On the contrary, his mind gained during that time a rare sharpness. At the same time I will eat of what you may offer me solely to do you pleasure."

And he took a seat without ceremony at our table. At the same time brother Ange silently pushed a stool between my chair and my master's, and slipped into position to receive his share of the pasty of partridges that my mother had just served up.

The philosopher, having thrown his cloak over the back of his chair, allowed us to remark the diamond buttons in his coat. He sat there dreamily. The shadow of his nose shaded his mouth, and his fallen cheeks sank into his jaw. His gloomy mood affected us all.

My good master himself drank in silence. The only sound one heard was the little brother chewing his pasty.

Suddenly the philosopher said:

"The more I think of it the more persuaded I am that this Salamander came for this young man."

And he pointed at me with his knife.

"Monsieur," I answered him, "if Salamanders are half such as you say, this one does me great honour, and I am much obliged to her. But truth to tell, I rather guessed at her than saw her, and this first meeting has roused my curiosity without satisfying it."

My good master was choking with the desire to speak his mind.

"Monsieur," he burst out all at once to the philosopher, "I am fifty-one years of age; I am bachelor of arts and doctor of theology; I have read all the Greek and Latin authors who have survived the injury done by time and the evil done by man, and I have never seen a Salamander, whence I reasonably conclude that no such thing exists."

"Excuse me," said brother Ange, half-choked with partridge and with fright. "Excuse me. But unhappily Salamanders do exist. And a Jesuit father, whose name I forget, has written a treatise on these apparitions. I myself saw, in a place called St. Claude, in the house of some villagers, a Salamander in a chimney-corner, right up against the stew-pot. She had a cat's head, a frog's body, and a fish tail. I threw a potful of holy water over the beast and she immediately vanished into thin air with a fearful frizzling noise, and in the midst of an exceedingly acrid smoke which all but burnt my eyes out. And what I tell you is so true that for at least a whole week my beard smelt of burning, which proves more than all the rest the malign nature of this beast."

"You are making fun of us, little brother," said the Abbé, "your frog with a cat's head is no more real than the nymph of this gentleman here. And moreover, it is a disgusting invention."

The philosopher began to laugh.

Brother Ange had not been allowed, said he, to see the Salamanders as known to the wise, "When the nymphs of the fire see capuchins they turn their backs on them."

"Oh! Oh!" said my father laughing loudly, "a nymph's back is too good for a capuchin."

And as he was in a good temper he passed a huge slice of pasty to the little brother.

My mother placed the roast in the middle of the table and took the opportunity of asking whether the Salamanders were good Christians, which she much doubted, having never heard that those who dwelt in fire praised the Lord.

"Madame," replied the Abbé, "many theologians of the Society of Jesus have acknowledged the existence of a whole race of incubi and succubi, who are not demons properly speaking because they do not allow themselves to be put to rout by a sprinkling of holy water, and who do not belong to the church triumphant, for spirits of glory would never have tried to seduce a baker's wife, as happened at Pérouse. But if you want my opinion, these are rather the unclean imaginings of a canting humbug than the views of a divine. We should abhor these ridiculous bedevilments and deplore that sons of the Church, born in the light, should form a less sublime idea of the world and of God than did a Plato or a Cicero in the shades of paganism. God, I venture to say, is more present in the Thoughts of Scipio than in those dark treatises on demonology,

whose authors pronounce themselves to be Christians and Catholics."

"Monsieur l'Abbé, mind what you say," said the philosopher. "Your Cicero spoke fluently and easily, but his was a commonplace mind, and he was not far advanced in the sacred sciences. Have you ever heard speak of Hermes Trismegistus * and the Emerald Table?" †

"Monsieur," said the Abbé, "I found a very ancient manuscript of 'The Emerald Table' in the library of my Lord Bishop of Séez, and I would have deciphered it sooner or later had not the chambermaid in the steward's household fled to Paris to seek her fortune and made me climb into the coach with her. There was no sorcery in that, Master philosopher, and the charms that worked upon her were those of nature:

Non facit hoc verbis: facie tenerisque lacertis
Devovet et flavis nostra puella comis."

"It is one more proof," said the philosopher, "that women are great enemies of knowledge, and so the wise man should keep himself from all dealings with them."

"Even in lawful marriage?" asked my father.

"Above all in lawful marriage," replied the philosopher.

"Alas, what is left for your poor wise man when he is disposed to relax a little?" asked my father.

The philosopher replied:

"The Salamanders are left to them."

* *Hermes Trismegistus.* Priest and philosopher of Egypt—instructed in theology, medicine, geography, hieroglyphics.

† *Table d'Emeraude.* The *Tabula Smasagdina*—work of Hermes Trismegistus.

At these words brother Ange raised a terrified nose above his plate.

"Do not speak thus, my good Monsieur," he murmured, "in the name of all the saints of my order, do not say such things! And do not lose sight of the fact that a Salamander is no other than the devil, who, as one knows, clothes himself in divers forms, sometimes pleasing, when he succeeds in disguising his natural ugliness, at other times hideous, when he lets his true nature be seen."

"It is for you to mind what you say, brother Ange," replied the philosopher, "and since you fear the devil, do not anger him too much nor excite him by ill-considered speeches. You know that the Old Enemy, the Spirit that denies, still holds such power in the spiritual world that even God must reckon with him. I will go further: that God, Who fears him, has made him His steward. Beware, little brother, beware! They understand one another!"

On hearing this speech, the poor capuchin thought he heard and saw the devil in person, whom the unknown precisely resembled, with his fiery eyes, his hooked nose, his dark skin, and the whole of his long thin person.

His wits, already confounded, were finally overwhelmed by pious terror. Feeling himself in the grip of the Evil One, he began to tremble in every limb, slipped into his pocket all the good scraps he could collect, got up very quietly and made for the door, moving backwards, and murmuring exorcisms.

The philosopher took no notice of him. He pulled from his coat a little dogs' eared parchment covered book, which he held out open to my good

master and me. It was an old Greek text, full of abbreviations and linked letters, which at first sight looked to me like a volume of Grammary. But Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, once he had donned his spectacles and held out the book at a just distance, began to read easily, characters, more like skeins of thread tangled by cat's claws, than the plain and steady lettering of my St. John Chrysostom, where I learnt the tongue of Plato and the Gospel. When he had finished his reading:

"Monsieur," said he, "this passage is to be understood in this way:

" 'Among the Egyptians, the instructed learn first of all the letters which are called epistolographic; secondly, the hieratic, which the hierogrammats use, and lastly, the hieroglyphic.' "

Then, pulling off his spectacles and waving them with an air of triumph:

"Ha! ha! Master philosopher," he added, "you don't catch me tripping. This is taken from the first book of the *Stromata,* whose author, Clement of Alexandria,* is not inscribed in the martyrology, for divers reasons, learnedly set forth by His Holiness Benedict II, the principal of which is that this father frequently erred in matters of faith. This exclusion should not trouble him much, if you consider with what philosophic detachment he regarded martyrdom during his life. He preferred exile, and took care to spare the crime to his persecutors, for he was a very good man. He wrote with elegance, had a lively talent, his morals were unim-

* *Clement of Alexandria.* Doctor and saint, 3rd century.

peachable, and even austere. He had an excessive fondness for allegories and for salads."

The philosopher stretched an arm, which elongating itself prodigiously, at least to me it seemed so, crossed the whole length of the table, to recover the book from the hands of my learned master.

"Enough," said he, replacing the *Stromata* in his pocket. "I see that you understand Greek. You have rendered the passage well enough, at any rate, in its vulgar and literal sense. I will make your fortune and that of your pupil. I shall employ you both in my house in translating Greek texts sent to me from Egypt."

And turning to my father:

"I imagine, mine host, that you will consent to let me have your son that I may make a learned man and a man of substance of him. If it is too much to ask of your paternal affection to give him up altogether, I will maintain at my expense a scullion to take his place in your cook-shop."

"Since your Excellency thus arranges it," replied my father, "I will not stand in the way of his benefiting my son."

"On the condition," said my mother, "that it shall not be at the cost of his soul? You must promise me, Monsieur, that you are a good Christian?"

"Barbe," said my father, "you are a saintly and worthy woman, but you force me to make excuses to his lordship for your want of manners, which comes less, truth to tell, from your disposition, which is good enough, than from your neglected education."

"Let the good woman speak," said the philoso-

pher, "and let her make her mind easy, I am a very religious man."

"That is a good thing," said my mother. "We must worship the holy Name of God."

"I worship all His Names, my good woman, for He has many. He is called Adonai, Tetragrammaton, Jehovah, Otheos, Athanatas, and Schyros, and many others."

"I don't know anything about it," said my mother, "but I am not surprised at what you tell me, Monsieur, for I have noticed that people of quality have many more names than common people. I come from Auneau, near the town of Chartres, and I was quite small when the lord of the manor passed from this world to the next; now I well remember how when the herald cried the death of the deceased lord he gave him nearly as many names as are to be found in the litany of saints. I readily believe that God has more names than had my lord of Auneau, because He has a still higher position. Educated people are very lucky to know them all. And if you help my son Jacques to advance in this knowledge I shall be very much obliged to you, Monsieur."

"Then that matter is settled," said the philosopher. "And as to you, Monsieur l'Abbé, you will not be averse from translating from the Greek—in consideration of a salary, be it understood."

My good master, who for some moments past had been trying to collect those few wits which were not already hopelessly bemused with the fumes of wine, filled his goblet, rose up, and said:

"Master philosopher, with my whole heart I accept your generous offer. You are a magnificent being. I am honoured, Monsieur, to be in your

service. Of furniture, there are two pieces I hold high in esteem, the bed and the board. The board, which laden, turn by turn about, with learned books and succulent dishes, serves to support the nourishment of body and mind; the bed, propitious to the sweets of repose as to the torments of love. It was surely an inspired man who gave to the Sons of Deucalion * the bed and the board. If I find at your house, Monsieur, these two precious pieces of furniture, I will sound your name, as that of my benefactor, in eternal praise, and I will celebrate you in Greek and Latin verse of divers metres."

Thus he spoke, and drank a great gulp of wine.

"That is well said," replied the philosopher. "I shall expect you both to-morrow morning at my house. You must follow the route to St. Germain as far as the Cross of Les Sablons. From the foot of this Cross reckon a hundred paces going west and you will find a small green door in a garden wall. Raise the knocker, which is in the shape of a veiled figure, its finger on its lips. You must ask the old man who opens the door for Monsieur d'Astarac."

"My son," said my good master, pulling me by the sleeve, "keep all this in your memory. Cross, knocker, and all the rest, so that we may be able to-morrow to find this gate of fortune. And you, Monsieur Mæcenas . . ."

But the philosopher had already disappeared without any one having seen him go.

* *Deucalion.* Son of Prometheus. Deucalion and Pyrrha were parents of the human race.

V

HE next day we fared early, my master and I, along the road to St. Germain. The snow which covered the ground under the reddish light from the sky, made the atmosphere dead and still. The road was deserted. We walked in great cart-ruts between the walls of market-gardens, tumble-down palings, and low houses whose windows watched us with suspicious eye. Then, having left behind us two or three broken-down hovels of wattle and daub, we saw in the midst of a desolate common, the Cross of Les Sablons. Fifty paces beyond was the beginning of an immense park enclosed by a ruined wall. This wall was pierced by a small green door whose knocker was in the shape of a horrible face, its finger on its lips. We readily recognised it for that which the philosopher had described to us, and lifted it and knocked.

After a considerable time, an old serving-man came and let us in and signed to us to follow him across a deserted park. Statues of nymphs, which had witnessed the youth of the late king, hid under the ivy their melancholy and their scars. At the end of the alley whose ditches were masked with snow, rose a mansion of brick and stone, which was as gloomy as the *château* of Madrid, its neighbour, and which topped by a roof of slate, all awry, seemed the very castle of the Sleeping Beauty.

While we followed the steps of the uncommuni-

cative serving-man, the Abbé said in my ear:

"I confess to you, my son, that the dwelling does not smile upon the view. It bears witness to the rude condition of French manners still inveterate at the time of Henry IV and it induces depression and even melancholy in the mind by the state of neglect into which it has been allowed to lapse. How far sweeter would it be to mount the enchanting slopes of Tusculum, in the hope of hearing Cicero discourse on virtue under the pines and terebinths of his villa, dear to philosophers. And have you not noticed, my son, that we did not pass a single inn or hostelry of any sort on the road and that it is necessary to cross the bridge and climb the hill as far as the crossing of the avenues of Bergères, to drink a glass of wine? It is true that there is the inn at the sign of the *Cheval Rouge* where I remember Madame de St. Ernest taking me once to dine, along with her monkey and her lover. You cannot imagine, Tournebroche, what good cheer is to be had there. The *Cheval Rouge* is as renowned for its lunches as for the number of its horses and its posting facilities. I assured myself of that while pursuing into the stables a certain serving-wench who seemed to me to be pretty. But she was not so; one might more justly have called her ugly. I lent her the illumination of my amorous fancy. Such is the state of men given over to themselves: piteous are their mistakes. We are abused by vain images, we follow dreams, and we embrace shadows. In God alone is truth and steadfastness."

Meanwhile, following the old servant, we climbed the disjointed steps of the old terrace.

"Alas," said the Abbé in my ear, "I begin to re-

gret your good father's cook-shop, where we ate many a choice morsel, expounding Quintilian the while."

Having scaled the first flight of a large stone staircase we were ushered into a room where Monsieur d'Astarac was busy writing near a big fire, surrounded by Egyptian coffins of human form, ranged against the wall, their cases painted with sacred emblems, and their faces in gold, with long shining eyes.

Monsieur d'Astarac invited us politely to sit down, and said:

"Messieurs, I was expecting you, and since you are both good enough to render me the favour of your services I beg you to consider this house as yours. You will be occupied here in translating Greek texts which I have brought back from Egypt. I have no doubt that you will put all your zeal into the accomplishment of this labour, when you learn that it concerns the work I have undertaken, which is to rediscover the lost knowledge whereby man shall be re-established in his original authority over the elements. Though I have no intention to-day of lifting from your eyes the veil of nature and of showing you Isis in all her dazzling nudity, I will confide to you the object of my studies without fear that you should betray the mystery, for I rely on your probity, and also on the power that I have of divining and of preventing anything that may be attempted against me, and of disposing of terrible and secret forces to avenge myself. In default of a fidelity which I do not question, my powers, Messieurs, assure me of your silence, and I risk nothing in exposing myself to you. You must know that man came from the

hands of Jehovah perfect in the knowledge he has since lost. At his birth he had great power and great wisdom. One sees it in the book of Moses. Yet it is needful to understand it. First of all, it is clear that Jehovah is not God, but a mighty Demon, for he created the world. The idea of a God at one and the same time a creator and perfect is but a barbarous fancy, a barbarism fit for a Celt or a Saxon. One cannot admit, however little one's intelligence may be formed, that a perfect being can add anything whatever to his perfection, were it but a hazel-nut. That stands to reason. God can have no conception. For, being infinite what can He well conceive? He does not create, for He is beyond time and space, conditions necessary to any construction. Moses was too good a philosopher to teach that the world was created by God. He knew Jehovah for what he is in reality, namely for a mighty Demon, and, to give him the name, for a Demiurge. Now, when Jehovah created man, he gave him the knowledge of the visible and invisible worlds. The fall of Adam and Eve, which I will one day explain to you, did not altogether destroy this knowledge in the first man and the first woman, whose enlightenment descended to their children. These doctrines, on which lordship over nature depends, were transcribed in the book of Enoch. The Egyptian priests kept the tradition, which they fixed in mysterious signs on the walls of temples and on the coffins of the dead. Moses, brought up in the sanctuary of Memphis, was one of the initiated. His books, to the number of five or even six, enclose like so many precious arks, the treasures of divine knowledge. One finds in them the noblest of secrets, if after having

purged them of unworthy interpolations one is careful to disdain the gross and literal meaning, to follow but the more subtle, which I have in great measure penetrated to, as will be made plain to you later on. However the truths whose virginity was guarded in the temples of Egypt passed to the sages of Alexandria, who added further to them, and crowned them with all the pure gold left as a legacy to Greece by Pythagoras and his disciples, with whom the powers of air held familiar converse. Therefore, Messieurs, we must explore the books of the Hebrews, the hieroglyphics of the Egyptians, and the treatises of those Greeks whom they call gnostics, because they had knowledge. For myself, as is only just, I have reserved the most arduous part of this great labour. I devote myself to deciphering the hieroglyphics that the Egyptians inscribed in the temples of their gods and on the tombs of the priests. Having brought back from Egypt many of these inscriptions, I am getting at their meaning with the help of the key that I have been able to find in the writing of Clement of Alexandria.

"The Rabbi Mosaïde, who lives a retired life under my roof, labours to re-establish the true meaning of the Pentateuch. He is an elder, and very learned in magic, who lived for seventeen years shut in the crypts of the great Pyramid, where he read the works of Thoth. As for you, Messieurs, I count on employing your knowledge to read the Alexandrine manuscripts which I have myself collected in large numbers. Doubtless you will find marvellous secrets in them, and I have no fear but that with the help of these three sources of enlightenment, the Egyptian, the Hebraic, and the Greek,

I shall soon arrive at possession of the means still lacking to me of ruling absolutely over nature both visible and invisible.

"Rest assured that I shall acknowledge your services by allowing you to participate to some extent in my powers.

"I do not speak to you of a more vulgar method of acknowledgment. At the point I have reached in my philosophic work money is but a mere trifle."

When Monsieur d'Astarac got to this point of his speech, my good master interrupted him:

"Monsieur," said he, "I will not conceal from you that this money, which seems but a trifle to you, is for me a burning anxiety, for I have experienced that it is not easy to gain it honestly or even otherwise. I shall therefore be grateful for any assurance you may give me on this subject."

Monsieur d'Astarac, with a gesture which seemed to sweep aside some invisible object, reassured Monsieur Jérôme Coignard. As for me, curious of all I saw, I only wished to begin my new life.

At his master's call, the old serving-man who had opened the door, appeared in the study.

"Messieurs," continued our host, "I give you your liberty until the mid-day meal. I shall be much obliged to you, however, if you will go and see the rooms prepared for you upstairs, and tell me if anything be wanting. Criton will show you the way."

After having made sure that we were following him, the silent Criton left the room and began to mount the stairs. He climbed to the very top. Then going a few steps down a long corridor, he showed us two very neat rooms where a good fire

was burning. I should never have believed that a house outwardly in such a ruined state and whose front showed but cracked walls and blind windows could in some parts be so habitable. My first care was to look where I was. Our rooms gave on to fields, and the view, over the marshy banks of the Seine, spread as far as the Calvary of Mount Valerian.

On taking a look at our furniture, I saw laid out on the bed, a grey coat, breeches to match, a hat, and a sword. On the carpet, a pair of buckled shoes stood genteelly paired, heels together, toes out, as if they had an innate appreciation of gallant bearing.

I augured favourably from all this of our master's liberality. To do him honour I took great pains over my toilet, and I powdered my hair freely with powder, of which I found a box full on a little table. I found in a drawer of the chest of drawers, a lace shirt and white stockings—all in keeping.

Having clad myself in the shirt, stockings, breeches, coat and waistcoat, I set about walking up and down the room, the hat under my arm, my hand on the hilt of my sword, stopping every moment to lean over the mirror, and regretting that Catherine the lace-maker could not see me thus gallantly equipped.

I had gone through this little performance several times when Monsieur Jérôme Coignard came into my room with new bands and a very respectable clerical collar.

"Is it you Tournebroche, my son?" he exclaimed. "Never forget that you owe these fine clothes to the knowledge that I have instilled into you. They suit a humanist such as you are, for where we speak

of the *humanities* it is as much as to say ornaments. But look at me, I beg of you, and tell me do I not look well. In this coat I feel that I am a man of worthy repute. This Monsieur d'Astarac is of a magnificent turn. 'Tis a pity that he is mad. But he is at least sane on one point—for he calls his valet Criton, that is to say judge. And it is true indeed that our valets are the witnesses of our every action. They are sometimes their instigation. When milord Verulam, Chancellor of England, whose philosophy is not much to my taste, but who was a learned man, entered the Upper House to take his trial, his lackeys, clad with a sumptuousness that gave evidence of the display exhibited by the chancellor in the conduct of his household, rose up as a mark of respect. But milord Verulam said to them: 'Be seated! Your aggrandisement has brought me low.'

"In reality, these rogues had by their extravagance rushed him to ruin and constrained him to acts for which he was indicted for corruption. Tournebroche, my son, may the example of milord Verulam, Chancellor of England, and author of the *Novum Organon* be always before your eyes. But to return to this Seigneur d'Astarac, in whose service we are, it is a great pity that he is a sorcerer and given over to evil knowledge. You know, my son, that I pride myself on my particularity in matters of faith. It costs me something to take service with a cabalist, who turns our sacred writings upside down, on the pretext of understanding them better so. All the same, if, as his name and his speech seem to indicate he is a gentleman of Gascony, we have nothing to fear. A Gascon can make pact with the devil, for you

may be sure that it is the devil who will be duped."

The bell for our mid-day dinner interrupted our talk.

"Tournebroche, my son," said my master, going downstairs, "remember during the meal to follow all my movements, so that you may imitate them. Having eaten at the third table of my lord Bishop of Séez I know how to behave myself. It is a difficult art. It is less easy to eat like a gentleman than to speak like one."

VI

IN the dining-room we found the table laid for three, where Monsieur d'Astarac made us sit down. Criton, who did the office of butler, served us with jellies, extracts and "purées" passed a dozen times through the sieve. We saw no roast appear. Though we were very careful to hide our surprise, my good master and I, Monsieur d'Astarac perceived it and said to us:

"Messieurs, this is only an experiment, and if it seems an unfortunate one to you, I will not persist in it. You shall be served with more ordinary dishes, and I myself will not disdain to partake. If the dishes that I offer you to-day are badly prepared, it is less the fault of my cook than that of the science of chemistry, which is yet in its infancy. All the same, this will give you some notion of what we shall see in the future. At present men eat without philosophy. They do not feed like reasonable beings. They do not even think about it. But what do they think about? They nearly all live in a state of stupidity, and even such as are capable of reflection occupy their mind with follies such as controversy and the making of poetry. Consider, Messieurs, the subject of man and his food since distant times when they ceased all commerce with Sylphs and Salamanders. Abandoned by these sprites of air, they sank heavily down into ignorance and barbarism. Without art and with-

out governance, they lived naked and miserable in caves, on the banks of streams, or in the forests. The chase was their only pursuit. When by surprise or superior swiftness they took some timid animal, they devoured their prey while it was yet quivering.

"Moreover, they ate the flesh of their companions, and of their weakly brethren, and the first sepulchres of humanity were living tombs, were bowels, famished and without compassion.

"After long and savage centuries, appeared a man divine whom the Greeks called Prometheus. There is no doubt that this sage had commerce with the race of Salamanders, in the secret resorts of the Nymphs. He learnt from them, and taught to poor mortals, the art of kindling and keeping fire. Among the innumerable gains which mankind has derived from him who is now enskied, one of the happiest was to be able to cook food, and by this treatment to render it lighter and less gross.

"And it is in great measure as a result of their nourishment being submitted to the action of fire, that men have slowly and by degrees become intelligent, industrious, reflective, and apt to cultivate the arts and sciences. But this was but the first step, and it is distressing to think that so many millions of years have rolled by without there having been a second. Since the time when our ancestors broiled a bear's ham over a brushwood fire, under the shelter of a rock, we have made no real progress in cookery. For you will scarcely reckon as anything, the inventions of Lucullus, and that fat pasty to which Vitellius gave the name of the buckler of Minerva, any more than our toasts, our patties, our stews, our stuffed meats, and all those

made dishes which still retain much of the old barbarity.

"The king's table at Fontainebleau, where they dish a whole stag in his skin, and with his antlers, presents to the eyes of a philosopher as gross a spectacle as that of the troglodytes crouching round the fire gnawing horse-bones. The gay pictures on the walls, the guards, the richly-dressed officers, the musicians playing airs from Lambert and Lulli * in the gallery, the silken cloths, the silver service, the cups of gold, the Venetian glass, the sconces, the chased epergnes decked with flowers, all these fail to deceive or to cast a charm which shall hide the true nature of this unclean charnel-house, where men and women meet to feast greedily on the carcasses of beasts, on broken bones and torn flesh. What an unphilosophic repast! We swallow, with stupid greed, muscles, fat and entrails of animals, without making any distinction in these substances between the parts which are really suitable for our nourishment and those, far more plentiful, which should be thrown away; and we bolt without distinction, the good and the bad, the useful and the hurtful. This is, however, where we should make a distinction, and if, in all the faculty, a single doctor of chemistry and philosopher could be found, we should no longer be obliged to sit down to these disgusting orgies.

"He would prepare for us, Messieurs, extracts of meat, containing merely what is in sympathy and affinity with our bodies. Only the quintessence of beef and swine-flesh would be taken, merely the elixir of partridges and pullets, and everything that

* *Lulli,* Jean-Baptiste. Born at Florence. Settled at court of Louis XIV. Created opera at Paris, 1633–1687.

one swallowed could be digested. It is what I do not despair of succeeding in doing one day, Messieurs, in dwelling more on the study of medicine and chemistry than I have hitherto had the time to do."

At these words from our host Monsieur Jérôme Coignard lifted his eyes from the Spartan broth on his plate, and looked uneasily at Monsieur d'Astarac.

"Even so our progress would still be inadequate," continued the latter. "An honest man cannot without disgust eat the flesh of animals, and nations cannot call themselves civilised so long as slaughter-houses and butchers' shops are to be found in their towns. But one day we shall know how to rid ourselves of these barbarous trades. When we know exactly the nutrient substances which are contained in the bodies of animals, it will become possible to draw these same substances out of the lifeless bodies, which will supply them abundantly. These bodies really contain all that is found in living beings, since the animal is formed from the vegetable, which in its turn has drawn its substance from lifeless matter.

"The next thing will be to nourish ourselves on extracts of metals and minerals suitably prepared by physicians. Have no fear the taste will be delicious and its absorption wholesome. Cooking will be done in retorts, and in alembics and we shall have alchemists as master-cooks. Are you not exceedingly anxious, Messieurs, to see these marvels? I promise you them in time to come. But you cannot yet grasp the excellent results they will effect."

"Truly, Monsieur, I fail to grasp it." said my good master, taking a drink of wine.

"Deign, in that case, to listen to me a moment," said Monsieur d'Astarac. "Being no longer weighed down by slow processes of digestion men will become singularly agile, their sight will become wonderfully keen, and they will see ships gliding on the seas of the moon. Their understanding will be clearer, their manners will soften. They will advance greatly in the knowledge of God and nature. But one must face the changes which will not fail to be produced. Even the structure of the human body will be modified. It is a fact that for want of use organs dwindle and even end by disappearing. It has been observed that fish deprived of light become blind; and in Valais I have seen shepherds who, living only on curds and whey, lost their teeth very early; some amongst them never even had any. One cannot but admire nature in that particular; she suffers nothing useless to exist. When mankind feeds but on the infusions I have described, the intestines will not fail to become shorter by several ells, and the size of the stomach will be considerably diminished."

"Upon my word," said my good master, "you go too fast, Monsieur, and risk making a bad job of it! It has never vexed me that women should have a little of that, so long as the rest was in proportion. It is a beauty which appeals to me. Do not inconsiderately prune it away."

"Well, never mind about that. We will leave women's waists and hips to shape themselves according to the canon of the Greek sculptors. That will be to please you, Monsieur l'Abbé, and in consideration of the needs of maternity; though, to speak candidly, I desire to make various changes on that point, of which I will speak to you some day.

To return to our subject, I ought to tell you that all I have told you up to the present is but feeling the way towards the true nourishment, which is that of the Sylphs, and the Spirits of the air. They drink in the light, which suffices to give a strength and wonderful supplenesss to their bodies. It is their only potion. One day it will be ours, Messieurs. It is merely a question of rendering potable the beams of the sun. I confess to not seeing with sufficient clearness the road to success, and I foresee numerous troubles and great obstacles in the way. If ever some sage attains this goal, mankind will equal the Sylphs and Salamanders in intelligence and beauty."

My good master listened to these words sitting bowed in his seat, his head bent in sadness. He seemed to be pondering the changes in his appearance the nutrition imagined by his host would one day bring about.

"Monsieur," said he at last, "did you not speak yesterday at the cook-shop of a certain elixir which dispenses with all other nourishment?"

"True," said Monsieur d'Astarac, "but that liquor is only good for philosophers; by that you will readily conceive that its usage is restricted. It were better not to speak of it."

However, a doubt troubled me, and I asked permission of my host to put it before him, certain that he would throw light upon it at once. He gave me permission to speak, and I said:

"Monsieur, these Salamanders who, as you say, are so beautiful and of whom, by your account, I have formed so charming a notion—have they had the misfortune to spoil their teeth by drinking light as the peasants of Valais have lost theirs by taking

nothing but milk-food? I allow that I am anxious on the point."

"My son," replied Monsieur d'Astarac, "your curiosity pleases me, and I will satisfy it. Salamanders have no teeth, properly speaking. But their gums are furnished with two rows of very white and shining pearls, which lend an inconceivable grace to their smile. Know, then, that these pearls are but materialised light."

I told Monsieur d'Astarac that I was very much relieved to hear it. He continued:

"Men's teeth are a sign of their ferocity. When we feed as we ought these teeth will be replaced by some ornament like the Salamander's pearls. Then we shall be unable to imagine how a lover could have looked without horror and disgust on the dog-teeth in his mistress's mouth."

VII

FTER dinner our host led us into a large gallery adjoining his study and serving as a library.

There on oaken shelves were ranged an innumerable army, or rather a great council of books, duodecimos, octavos, quartos, folios, covered in calf, basil, morocco, parchment and pigskin. Six windows threw light on this silent gathering which stretched from one end of the apartment to the other the whole length of the high walls. Great tables, alternating with celestial globes and astronomical instruments, occupied the middle of the gallery. Monsieur d'Astarac begged us to choose the corner which seemed to us the most convenient for work.

But my good master, his mouth watering, his head thrown back, feasted his eyes and inhaled the very atmosphere of books.

"By Apollo!" he cried, "a magnificent library indeed! The library of my lord Bishop of Séez, rich as it is in works on the canon-law, cannot be compared to this. There is no resort more pleasing to my taste, not even the Elysian Fields described by Virgil. I make out at first glance so many rare works and so many precious collections that I doubt, Monsieur, if any private library can better this, which only yields in France to the Mazarin, and to the Royal. I go so far as to say,

at the sight of the Greek and Latin manuscripts, which crowd this corner here, that after the Bodleian, the Ambrosian, the Laurentian and the Vatican, we may name the Astaracian. Without flattering myself I can scent truffles and books from afar, and I hold you from this moment for the equal of Peiresc,* Grolier, and de Canevarius, princes among bibliophiles!"

"I out-top them all," replied Monsieur d'Astarac calmly, "and this library is infinitely more precious than all those you have just named.

"The king's library is but a book-pedlar's lot besides mine, unless you merely reckon by number of volumes and mass of inked paper.

"Gabriel Naudé,† and your Abbé Bignon,‡ renowned as book collectors, in comparison with myself, were but indolent shepherds of a sheepish and ignoble flock of books.

"As to the Benedictines, I grant you they are industrious, but they have no nicety of discernment, and their libraries reflect the mediocrity of the minds that have formed them. My collection, Monsieur, is not on the model of these. The works which I have brought together form a whole which will not fail to procure me the Knowledge. It is gnostic, œcumenical, and spiritual. If all the lines traced on these innumerable leaves of parchment and of paper could enter in due order into your brain, Monsieur, you would know all things, be capable of all things, you would be the master of nature, a worker in plasmic matter; you would hold

* *Peiresc,* N. C. Fabri de. Savant, b. Provence, 1580–1637.

† *Naudé,* Gabriel. Litterateur and bibliophile, b. Paris, 1600–1653.

‡ *Bignon,* Jérôme. Scholar and writer. Life by Perrault, 1589–1656.

the world between the two fingers of your hand as I hold these grains of snuff."

Whereupon he offered his box to my good master.

"You are very good," said Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard.

And letting his ravished gaze wander once more over this marshalled learning, he cried:

"There, between the third and fourth windows are shelves bearing an illustrious burden! The Oriental manuscripts are assembled and seem to converse in company! I can see that ten or twelve of them are very venerable under their rags of purple, and gold-brocaded silk. There are some who wear clasps of precious stones to their coats, like the Byzantine emperors. Others again are shut in plaques of ivory."

"Those," said Monsieur d'Astarac, "are the cabalists, Jew, Arabic and Persian. That is *The Hand of Power* you have just opened. Alongside you will find *The Spread Table, The Faithful Pastor, Fragments of the Temple,* and *The Light in Darkness.* One place is empty; that of *The Still Waters,* a precious treatise which Mosaïde is at the moment studying. Mosaïde, as I have already told you, Messieurs, is occupied in my house in discovering the most profound secrets contained in Hebrew writings, and, although more than a hundred years old, this rabbi is unwilling to die until he has penetrated the meaning of every cabalistic symbol. I am under great obligation to him; therefore I beg of you, Messieurs, to evince the same feelings towards him that I have myself.

"Enough of that, and now let us turn to what particularly concerns you. I thought, Monsieur

l'Abbé, you might transcribe and put into Latin these Greek manuscripts of inestimable value. I have faith in your knowledge and in your zeal, and I do not doubt that your pupil will soon be of great help to you."

And addressing himself to me:

"Yes, my son, I have great hopes of you. They are founded in great measure on the education you have received. For you were, so to speak, nourished in the flames, under a chimney-hood haunted by Salamanders. This circumstance has great weight."

As he spoke he seized an armful of manuscripts which he placed on the table.

"This," said he, pointing to a roll of papyrus, "comes from Egypt. It is a work of Zozimus the Panopolitan,* which was thought to be lost, and which I myself found in the coffin of a priest of Serapis. And what you see there," he added, showing us some shreds of shining and fibrous leaves on which Greek characters traced with a brush were dimly to be discerned, "are quite unheard of revelations which we owe, the one to Sophar the Persian, the other to John, arch-priest of St. Evagia.

"I shall be infinitely obliged to you if you will first of all busy yourself with these works. Afterwards we will study the manuscripts of Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemaïs, of Olympiodorus and Stephanus, which I found in Ravenna in a vault where they had been shut up since the reign of

* *Zozimus the Panopolitan.* Celebrated hermetic philosopher of the 3rd century. Greatest of the alchemists. According to Photius the historian Zozimus wrote twenty-eight works of alchemy and dedicated them to his sister Theosebia. There are MSS. of his in the Librairie Nationale at Paris.

the ignorant Theodosius, surnamed the Great.

"Messieurs, you will please first get an idea of what this vast work will mean. At the end of the room you will find, to the right of the fireplace, all the lexicons and grammars I have been able to collect, and these will be of some use to you. Permit me to leave you; there are four or five Sylphs awaiting me in my study. Criton will see that you want for nothing. Farewell."

As soon as Monsieur d'Astarac was out of the room my good master sat down before the papyrus of Zozimus and arming himself with a magnifying-glass he had found on the table, began to decipher it. I asked him if he had not been surprised at all he had just heard.

He answered without raising his head:

"My son, I have known too many kinds of people and gone through too many changes of fortune to be astonished at anything.

"This gentleman appears to be mad, less because he is really so than because his thoughts are so excessively different from those of the vulgar. But if one paid attention to the conversation commonly held in this world one would find still less sense than in that of this philosopher. Left to itself, even the loftiest human reason builds its palaces and temples in the clouds, and truly Monsieur d'Astarac gathers a sufficiency of fog. There is no truth but in God; do not forget that, my son. But this verily is the book of Imouth which Zozimus the Panopolitan wrote for his sister Theosebia. What glory and what joy to read this unique manuscript found again in such wonderful fashion. I shall consecrate my days and my nights to it. I pity those ignorant men whose idleness throws them

into debauchery. It is a miserable life they lead. What is a woman compared with an Alexandrian papyrus? Compare, I ask you, this most notable library with a wine-shop, the *Petit Bacchus,* and the handling this precious manuscript with the caresses one bestows on girls in an arbour, and tell me, my son, in which choice does true content abide? I, boon companion of the Muses, admitted to those wordless revels of meditation the orator of Madaura * celebrated with eloquence, I give thanks to God that He has made me an honest man."

* *The orator of Madaura.* Apuleius, author of the famous romance, "The Golden Ass."

VIII

FOR the space of a month or even six weeks Monsieur Coignard applied himself day and night as he had promised to reading Zozimus the Panopolitan. During meals, which we took at Monsieur d'Astarac's table, the conversation ran but on the opinions of gnostics and on the knowledge of the ancient Egyptians. Being but a very ignorant scholar I gave my master little enough help. Still I busied myself in researches under his directions to the best of my ability; I took a certain pleasure in them. And we undoubtedly lived a happy and peaceful life. Towards the seventh week Monsieur d'Astarac gave me leave to go and see my parents at the cook-shop. The shop seemed to me strangely shrunk. My mother was there, alone and sad. She gave a loud cry when she saw me equipped like a young prince."

"My Jacques," she said, "I am happy indeed."

And she began to cry. We embraced one another. Then, wiping her eyes with a corner of her coarse apron:

"Your father," she said, "is at the *Petit Bacchus*. He goes there a great deal since you left, for he takes less pleasure in his home now that you are away. He will be pleased to see you again. But tell me, my Jacquot, are you pleased with your new life? I have had my regrets that I let you go away with this nobleman. I even accused myself in con-

fession, to Monsieur the third *vicaire,* of having preferred the good of your body to that of your soul, and of not having given enough thought to God in placing you out. Monsieur the third *vicaire* rebuked me kindly and exhorted me to follow the example of the virtuous women of Holy Scripture, of whom he named several to me, but those are names that I see plainly enough I shall never remember. He did not explain himself very fully, as it was Saturday night, and the church was full of penitents."

I comforted my good mother as well as I could, and told her how Monsieur d'Astarac made me work at Greek, which is the language of the Gospel. This thought was pleasing to her. Nevertheless she was still troubled with cares.

"You will never guess, my Jacques," she said to me, "who has been speaking to me of Monsieur d'Astarac. Why, Cadette Saint-Avit, the servant of the curé of St. Benoît. She comes from Gascony, from a place called Laroque-Timbaut, quite near St. Eulalie, where Monsieur d'Astarac is lord of the manor. Cadette St. Avit is old, you know, as a priest's servant should be. When she was young and lived in that neighbourhood, she knew the three Messieurs d'Astarac, one of whom, captain of a ship, was drowned in the sea. He was the youngest. The second, colonel of a regiment, went to the war and was killed there. The eldest, Hercule d'Astarac, is the only survivor. It is this one then whom you are with, and for your good, my Jacques, at least I hope so. When young he was magnificent in his attire, liberal in his ways, but of a gloomy cast. He held aloof from public office, and did not seem eager to enter the king's service

as his brothers did, and there meet an honourable end. He was in the habit of saying that there was nothing glorious in bearing a sword at one's side, that he knew no trade more ignoble than the noble career of arms, and that a village bone-setter, was, in his opinion, much above a brigadier or a marshal of France. Such was his talk. I must own that it does not seem either bad or mischievous to me, but rather bold and odd. Still it must in some measure be condemned, since Cadette St. Avit said that Monsieur the curé took exception to it, as contrary to the ordering of things established by God in the world, and as opposed to passages in the Bible, where God is called a name which means field-marshal. That would be a great sin. Monsieur Hercule held himself so aloof from the court that he refused to make the journey to Versailles to be presented to his majesty, as his birth warranted. He said: 'The king does not visit me. I shall not visit him.' And it stands to reason, my Jacquot, that this is a most unnatural speech."

My good mother looked at me with troubled interrogation, and then went on in the same way:

"What I have still to tell you, my Jacquot, is even less credible. Yet Cadette St. Avit spoke of it as sure and certain. I will tell you that Monsieur Hercule d'Astarac, not leaving his domain, cared for nothing but the putting of sunlight into glass bottles. Cadette St. Avit did not know how he set about it, but of this much she is certain, that in the course of time, in these glass bottles well corked and warmed in a *bain-marie,* women were formed very tiny and beautifully made, and dressed like princesses in a play. You laugh, my Jacquot, yet one cannot joke at these things when one sees

the consequences. It is a great sin to make creatures in this way who cannot be baptized and can never participate in eternal bliss. For you can scarcely imagine that Monsieur d'Astarac took these little dolls to the priests in their bottles to hold them over the baptismal font? They could never have found a god-mother."

"But, dear mother," said I, "Monsieur d'Astarac's dolls have no need of baptism for they had no share in original sin."

"I never thought of that," said my mother, "and Cadette St. Avit herself said nothing about it, although she is servant to a curé. Unfortunately she left Gascony very young to come into France, and she heard no more of Monsieur d'Astarac, his bottles and his puppets. I hope indeed, my dear Jacquot, that he has renounced these evil works which could not be accomplished without the help of the Evil One."

But I asked:

"Tell me, my good mother, Cadette St. Avit, the curé's servant, did she see with her own eyes these ladies in the bottles?"

"Not so, my child; Monsieur d'Astarac was far too secretive to show those dolls. But she heard them spoken of by an ecclesiastic of the name of Fulgence, who was always about the *château* and swore he had seen these little people come out of their glass prison and dance a minuet. And, therefore, she had all the more reason for believing it. For one may doubt what one sees but not the word of an honest man, particularly when he is an ecclesiastic. There is another drawback to these practices, that is that they are extremely costly, and one cannot imagine, Cadette St. Avit said, the expense

Monsieur Hercule went to, to procure the bottles of various shapes, the furnaces, and the grammaries with which he had filled his *château*. But by the death of his brother he became the richest gentleman in the county, and while he wasted his substance in folly his fat lands worked for him. Cadette St. Avit judges that notwithstanding his outlay he must still be very rich, even now."

As she spoke my father entered the shop. He embraced me fondly and confided to me that the house had lost half its attraction in consequence of my departure, and that of Monsieur Jérôme Coignard, who was a good fellow and a jovial. He complimented me on my clothes and gave me some hints on deportment, declaring that business had bred an affable manner in him from the continual obligation he was under to greet customers as if they were gentlemen, even when they were of the vulgarest sort. He gave me the advice to round my elbow and turn out my toes, and counselled me over and above to go and see Léandre, at the fair of Saint Germain, so as to model myself on him.

We dined together with good appetite, and parted in floods of tears. I loved them both very much, and what made me cry most was that I felt that, in six weeks of absence, they had become nearly strangers to me. And I think that their grief came from the same feeling.

IX

IT was black night when I left the cook-shop. At the corner of the rue des Ecrivains I heard a rich deep voice that sang:

"If it be thine honour's lost,
Frail and fair, 'twas thy desire."

And I soon saw on the side whence came the voice brother Ange who, his wallet swinging on his shoulder and holding Catherine the lace-maker round the waist, walked in the shadow with staggering and triumphant gait, throwing up the waters of the gutter under his sandals in magnificent great splashes of mud which seemed to celebrate his sottish gloriousness, as the basins at Versailles play their jets in honour of kings. I stood against a stone door-post that they might not see. But it was an unnecessary precaution for they were too occupied with one another. Catherine laughed, with her head thrown back on the monk's shoulder. A ray of moonlight played on her fresh lips, and in her eyes, as in spring waters. And I went on my way, vexed to the soul, with a weight on my heart, thinking on the rounded shape of this beautiful girl pressed in the arms of a dirty capuchin.

"How should it be," I asked myself, "that so sweet a thing should come into such foul hands? And if it be that Catherine disdains me, need she yet make her scorn the more cruel by the liking she shows for this scoundrel, brother Ange?"

The preference seemed to me astonishing, and surprised as much as it disgusted me. But it was not in vain that I was the pupil of Monsieur Jérôme Coignard. The incomparable master had formed my mind to meditation. I pictured to myself the Satyrs one sees in gardens ravishing the Nymphs, and I made the reflection that if Catherine was made like a Nymph, the Satyrs such as they are exhibited to us, were as frightful as the monk. I came to the conclusion that I should not be too much astonished at that I had just seen. Still my reasons did not dissipate my grief; no doubt because they did not come from the same source. These meditations led me, across the shades of night and the puddles melted by the thaw, to the St. Germain road, where I met Monsieur l'Abbé Jérôme Coignard, who had been supping in the town and was returning late to the Cross of Les Sablons.

"My son," he said, "I have just been discussing Zozimus and the gnostics at the table of a very learned ecclesiastic, a second Peiresc. The wine was rough and the cheer but middling. But nectar and ambrosia flowed in our speech."

My good master then spoke of the Panopolitan with unimaginable eloquence. Alas! I was a bad listener, thinking of that bead of moonlight that fell through the dark on Catherine's lips.

At last he paused, and I asked him on what ground the Greeks had founded the Nymph's taste for Satyrs. My good master was ready with an answer to any questions, so extensive was his knowledge. Said he:

"My son, it is a taste founded on natural sympathy. Although less ardent, it is as pronounced as that of the Satyrs for the Nymphs to which

it corresponds. Poets have well observed the distinction. In this connection I will tell you a singular adventure I read of in a manuscript which belonged to my lord bishop of Séez' library (I see it still). It was a compilation in folio written in good writing of the last century. The singular story it told was this. A Norman gentleman and his wife took part in a public merry-making, the one disguised as a Satyr, the other as a Nymph. One knows from Ovid with what ardour the Satyrs pursued the Nymphs. This gentleman had read his Metamorphoses. He entered so well into the spirit of his disguise that nine months afterwards his wife presented him with a child that had the goat's foot and the hornéd brow. What became of the father we do not know, except that he died—the lot common to all—leaving, along with his little goat-foot, another and a younger child, a Christian this one, and of human form. This younger son appealed to the law that his brother should be deprived of the paternal inheritance by reason that he did not belong to the race redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. The Parliament of Normandy, sitting in Rouen, gave him judgment and the decree was registered."

I asked my good master if it were possible that such a travesty could have its effect on nature, and if the shape of the child result from the cut of a coat. Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard advised me not to believe a word of it.

"Jacques Tournebroche, my son," said he, "always bear in mind that a sound intelligence rejects everything that is contrary to reason, except in matters of faith, where it is necessary to believe blindly. God be thanked I have never erred in the

matter of the dogmas of our holy religion, and I trust that I shall be found in this disposition in the article of death."

While talking thus we arrived at the *château.* In the midst of the darkness the roof showed up with a red illumination. From one of the chimneys sparks poured out which mounted in volumes to fall again in golden rain under the thick smoke which hid the sky. We both thought that flames were devouring the building. My good master tore his hair and groaned.

"My Zozimus! my papyrus! my Greek manuscripts! Help! help! my Zozimus!"

Running up the avenue through pools of water which reflected the glow of the fire, we crossed the park which was buried in deep shadow still and deserted. In the *château* all seemed asleep. We heard the roar of the fire, which filled the dark stairway. We went up two steps at a time, stopping at moments to hear whence came this awful noise.

It seemed to come from a corridor on the first floor where we had never yet set foot. We felt our way along this direction, and seeing a red light through the cracks of a closed door we flung ourselves upon it. It yielded suddenly.

Monsieur d'Astarac, who had opened it, stood tranquilly before us. His long, black-clad figure stood erect in a very atmosphere of flame. He asked us quietly what urgent matter made us seek him at this hour.

There was no conflagration, but an enormous fire issuing from a reverberatory furnace, known to me since as an athanor. The whole of this room, and it was big enough, was full of long-necked glass bot-

tles surmounted by winding, duck-billed glass tubes; retorts, like faces with inflated cheeks, whence sprang a nose like an elephant's trunk; crucibles, matrasses, cupels, cucurbits and vessels of unknown shapes.

My good master, wiping his face, which shone like fire, said:

"Ah, Monsieur! we thought the *château* was blazing like a handful of straw. Thank God the library is not burnt. But I see, Monsieur, that you practice the spagyric art."

"I will not conceal from you," replied Monsieur d'Astarac, "that I have made considerable progress in it, without, however, having altogether found the Theleme, which would complete my work. At the very moment you burst in I was in the act of distilling the *Spirit of the World* and the *Flower of Heaven,* which is the *True Fountain of Youth.* Do you understand alchemy at all, Monsieur Coignard?"

The Abbé replied that he had acquired a certain smattering from books, but he held the practice pernicious, and contrary to religion.

Monsieur d'Astarac smiled and said:

"You are too able a man, Monsieur Coignard, not to know the *Flying Eagle,* the *Bird of Hermes,* the *Fowl of Hermogenes,* the *Raven's Head,* the *Green Lion* and the *Phœnix.*"

"I have heard it said," replied my good master, "that those are the names of the philosopher's stone in its different states. But I doubt the possibility of transmuting metals."

Monsieur d'Astarac answered very confidently:

"Nothing is easier for me, Monsieur, than to put an end to your uncertainty."

He went and opened an old lop-sided cupboard propped against the wall, took out a copper coin bearing the effigy of the late king, and drew our attention to a round spot which ran through it. "That," said he, "is the effect of the stone which has transmuted the copper into silver. But that is but a trifle."

He returned to the cupboard and took out a sapphire as large as an egg, an opal of marvellous size, and a handful of perfectly beautiful emeralds.

"Here," said he, "is some of my work, which will sufficiently prove to you that the spagyric art is not the dream of an empty brain."

At the bottom of the bowl where the stones lay were five or six small diamonds which Monsieur d'Astarac did not even mention. My good master asked if they were also of his making. And the alchemist having replied that they were:

"Monsieur," said the Abbé, "I advise you first to show these latter to the curious, for prudence sake. If you first show the sapphire, opal and the ruby, they will say that only the devil could produce such stones, and they will proceed against you for sorcery. Moreover, only the devil could live comfortably with these furnaces, where one inhales the very flames. As for me, who have been here but a quarter of an hour, I am already nearly cooked."

Monsieur d'Astarac smiled benevolently, and showing us out explained himself as follows:

"Although knowing well what to think as regards the reality of the devil and of That Other, I am always willing to speak of them with those who believe in them. The devil and That Other are, as we may say, characters; and we may talk of them as of Achilles and Thersites. Rest assured, Mes-

sieurs, that if the devil be what they say, he does not dwell in so subtle an element as the fire. It is a contradiction of the worst kind to put so evil a beast in the substance of the sun. But as I had the honour to explain, Monsieur Tournebroche, to your mother's friend the capuchin, I consider that Christians calumniate Satan and his demons. That there may be, in some unknown land, beings yet more wicked than men is possible, though barely conceivable. Assuredly, if they do exist, they inhabit regions deprived of light, and if they burn it is in ice, which truthfully enough causes acute pain, and not in illustrious flame amidst the ardent daughters of the stars. They suffer because they are wicked, and wickedness is an ill, but it can be but from frost-bite. As to your Satan, Monsieur, who is held in such horror by our theologians, I do not think him so contemptible, to judge by all you say of him, and if, peradventure, he exists I should take him for no evil beast, but rather for some slight Sylph, or, to put him at the lowest, for a metal-working Gnome, very intelligent and slightly ironical."

My good master stopped his ears and fled that he might not hear any more.

"What impiety, Tournebroche my son," he cried on the stairs, "what blasphemy! Did you fully understand the detestableness of this philosopher's principles? He pushes his atheism to the point of a frenzied rejoicing which confounds me. But that of itself renders him nearly innocent in the matter, for, being separate from all belief, he cannot lacerate the Holy Church as do those who are still partially attached to her by some half-severed and still bleeding member. Such, my son, are the Luther-

ans and the Calvinists, whose rupture is the gangrene of the Church. Atheists, on the contrary, are their own damnation, and one may die with them without sin. So we need have no scruples in living with this Monsieur d'Astarac, who believes in neither God nor devil. But did you notice, Tournebroche my son, that at the bottom of the bowl lay a handful of small diamonds he himself scarcely troubled to take count of, and which seemed to me of very good water? I have my doubts about the opal and the sapphire. But as to those small diamonds, they seemed to me to be the real thing."

Having reached our rooms upstairs we bade each other good-night.

X

WE led, my good master and I, a secluded and regular life until the spring came. We worked all morning, shut up in the library, and we returned there after dinner as to the play—according to Monsieur Jérôme Coignard's expression; not indeed, as this excellent man said, to witness a scurrilous show, after the manner of men of fashion and lackeys, but to hear the sublime if contradictory dialogues of ancient writers.

In this way the reading and translation of the Panopolitan advanced wonderfully. To this I scarcely contributed. Such work was beyond my knowledge, and it was as much as I could do to learn the shape the Greek characters took on papyrus. At the same time I helped my master to consult the authors who could throw light on his researches, particularly Olympiodorus and Photius,* who since then have ever remained familiar to me. The little help I gave him raised me much in my own estimation.

After a long and bitter winter I was in a fair way to become a *savant,* when the spring came all at once with her gay train of sunshine, of tender

* *Photius.* His elevation to the Patriarchate of Constantinople caused a great schism. He was deposed by Basilius, recalled and a second time deposed by Leo in 886. He wrote "Myrobiblon," a work containing a summary of 280 different authors, and his collection of the Canons of the Church, his Letters, and his Lexicon are also famous.

green, and the song of birds. The scent of the lilac which mounted into the library made me fall to vague dreamings from which my good master brusquely dragged me, saying to me:

"Jacquot Tournebroche, climb up the ladder if you please, and tell me if that rogue of a Manetho * does not speak of a god Imhotep, who with his contradictions torments me like a fiend?"

And my good master charged his nose with snuff with an air of much content.

"My son," he said further, "it is to be remarked that our clothes have great influence on our moral being. Since my clerical collar is all spotted with different sauces that I have let drop on it I do not feel so worthy a man. Tournebroche, now you are clad like a marquis, are you not tickled with the desire to assist at an opera dancer's toilet, and to push a roll of false notes on to a faro-table? In one word, don't you feel yourself a man of quality? Do not take what I say in bad part, and remember that it is sufficient to give a coward a bear-skin cap to make him go and get his head broken in the king's service. Tournebroche, our feelings are made up of a thousand things which escape us by their very minuteness, and the destiny of our immortal soul depends sometimes on a breath too light to bend a blade of grass. We are the plaything of the winds. But hand me, I beg you, the rudiments of Vossius † whose red edges I see gaping open under your left arm."

That day, after the three o'clock dinner, Monsieur d'Astarac took my good master and myself for a walk in the park. He led us to the west side,

* *Manetho.* Egyptian historian, 3rd century, B. C.

† *Vossius,* G. J. German savant, b. Heidelberg, 1577–1649.

which looked out on Rueil and Mt. Valerian. It was the most withdrawn and the loneliest. Ivy, and grass close-cropped by the rabbits, covered the alleys, which were blocked here and there by huge trunks of dead trees. The marble statues on either side smiled, knowing nothing of their ruin. A Nymph with her broken hand to her lips signed to a shepherd to be discreet. A young Faun, whose head lay on the ground, still sought his lips with his flute. And all these beings of divinity seemed to teach us to despise the hurts of time and fortune. We followed the banks of a canal where the rain-water refreshed the small green frogs. At one point, around the juncture of several alleys, were sloping fountains where the wood-pigeons drank. Having come to this spot we took a narrow path cut in the underwood.

"Walk carefully," said Monsieur d'Astarac. "This path is dangerous, for it is bordered with mandragoras who sing at nightfall at the foot of the trees. They are hidden in the ground. Take care not to step on them, you would either take a love-sickness or a thirst for riches, and you would be lost, for the passions inspired by the mandragora are melancholy."

I asked him how we could possibly avoid this unseen danger. Monsieur d'Astarac replied that one could escape it by divining it intuitively and not otherwise.

"Anyway," he added, "this path is fateful."

It led straight to a brick cottage hidden in ivy, which had doubtless once served as a keeper's lodge. Here the park terminated on the monotonous marshes of the Seine.

"You see this cottage," said Monsieur d'Astarac.

"It has in its keeping the wisest of men. There it is that Mosaïde, now aged one hundred and twelve years, penetrates with a persistency that has a majesty of its own to the arcana of nature. He has left Imbonatus * and Bartolini † far behind him. I desired to honour myself by entertaining under my roof the greatest of cabalists since Enoch the son of Cain. But religious scruples prevent Mosaïde from sitting at my table which he holds for Christian—in which he does it too much honour. You cannot conceive to what extremity of violence this sage carries his hatred of Christians. It is under great persuasion only that he consents to inhabit this cottage where he lives alone with his niece Jael. Messieurs, you must no longer delay in making his acquaintance, and I will present you both immediately to this inspired being."

Having spoken thus, Monsieur d'Astarac pushed us into the cottage and made us climb up a spiral staircase to a room where, in the midst of scattered manuscripts in a great winged chair, sat an aged man, bright-eyed, hook-nosed, whose sloping chin let fall two thin streamers of white beard. A velvet cap, shaped like a cap of state, covered his bald head, and his body so thin as to be scarcely human, was wrapped in an old yellow silk gown, splendid but soiled.

Although his piercing gaze was turned towards us, he showed no sign of being aware of our approach. His face showed a painful stubbornness

* *Imbonatus* (Jos.). His "Bibliotheca Latina-Hebraica" was published at Rome 1694.

† *Bartolini,* Riccardo. B. Perugia 15th century. Controversy with Pico della Mirandola.

and he twisted slowly between his wrinkled fingers the reed which served him as a pen.

"Do not expect empty words from Mosaïde," said Monsieur d'Astarac.

"For many a long day this sage has discoursed with no one save the Genii and myself. His discourse is sublime. As he will doubtless not consent to converse with you, Messieurs, I will give you in a few words an idea of his worth. Firstly, he has penetrated to the spiritual meaning of the books of Moses in accordance with the value of the Hebrew characters, which depend on the order of the letters in the alphabet. This order had been upset after the eleventh letter. Mosaïde has re-established it, which Atrabis, Philo,* Avicenna,† Raymond Lully,‡ Pico della Mirandola,§ Reuchlin,‖ Henry More, and Robert Fludd were unable to do. Mosaïde knows the golden number which corresponds to Jehovah in the spirit-world. And you will understand, Messieurs, that that is of infinite importance."

My good master drew his box from his pocket and after offering it civilly to us inhaled a pinch of snuff, and said:

"Do you not think, Monsieur d'Astarac, that these attainments are extremely likely to guide you to the devil at the end of this transitory life? For this Seigneur Mosaïde errs palpably in his interpretation of Holy Writ. When Our Saviour died on

* *Philo* (surnamed the Jew). Philosopher, b. Alexandria, 20 B. C.

† *Avicenna.* Arabic physician, 980-1037.

‡ *Lully,* Raymond. Spanish writer, alchemist, known as "Doctor illuminatus," b. Parma, 1255-1315.

§ *Mirandola,* Giovanni Pico della. Italian scholar, wrote "De omni re scibili," 1463–1494.

‖ *Reuchlin,* Johann. Savant, humanist, b. Pforzheim, 1455-1522.

the Cross for the redemption of mankind, the synagogue felt a bandage tighten over her eyes, she tottered like a drunken woman, and her crown fell from her head. Since then the interpretation of the Old Testament has been relegated to the Catholic Church, to which I belong notwithstanding my multiple sins."

At these words Mosaïde, looking like a Satyr, smiled in a manner truly terrifying, and addressed my good master in a slow grating far-away voice:

"The Mashora has not confided its secrets to you, nor the Mischna * its mysteries."

"Mosaïde," continued Monsieur d'Astarac, "interprets clearly not only the books of Moses but that of Enoch, which is much more important, and which for lack of understanding the Christians have rejected, as the cock in the Arabian fable disdained the pearl fallen in his food. This book of Enoch, Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, is the more precious as one finds therein the first dealings of the daughters of men and the Sylphs. For you well understand that these angels whom Enoch shows us as allying themselves with women in amorous intercourse are Sylphs and Salamanders."

"I am ready to understand it that way," replied my good master, "so as not to annoy you. But by what has been left to us of the book of Enoch, which is visibly apocryphal, I suspect that those angels were not Sylphs, but Phœnician merchants."

"And on what, may I ask, do you found such a strange opinion?" said Monsieur d'Astarac.

"I found it, Monsieur, on this, that it says in this book that it was the angels who taught to women the usage of bracelets and necklaces, the art of

* *Mashora and Mischna.* Books of the Talmud.

painting their eyebrows, and of using all kinds of dyes. It is also recounted in this book that the angels taught to the daughters of men the properties of roots and trees, charms and the art of stargazing. In all good faith, Monsieur, have not these angels rather the look of Tyrians or Sidonians disembarking on some half-wild coast, and undoing at the foot of the rocks their corded bales to tempt the daughters of the savage tribes? These traffickers gave them collarettes of copper, amulets and medicaments in exchange for amber, incense and furs, and they amazed these handsome ignorant creatures by their talk of the stars with a knowledge gained in navigation. That is all quite straightforward, and I should like to know on what point Monsieur Mosaïde can gainsay it."

Mosaïde kept silence, and Monsieur d'Astarac smiled once more. "Monsieur Coignard," said he "you do not argue badly, ignorant as you are still of gnosticism and cabalism. What you say makes me think that there may have been some gnomes who were metal-workers and goldsmiths among the Sylphs who united themselves in love with the daughters of men. Gnomes, in fact, readily busy themselves with goldsmiths' work, and probably ingenious demons wrought those bracelets you think were of Phœnician manufacture. But you will suffer some disadvantages, I warn you Monsieur, in measuring yourself with Mosaïde in the knowledge of human antiquities. He has found remains thought to be lost, among others the column of Seth and the oracles of Sambethe, daughter of Noah, and the most ancient of the Sibyls."

"Oh!" exclaimed my good master, bounding on the dusty floor, whence arose a cloud of dust, "oh!

what moonshine! It is too much of a good thing! You are laughing at me. And Monsieur Mosaïde cannot house so many follies in his head under his big cap, which looks like Charlemagne's crown. This column of Seth is a ridiculous invention of that thickhead Flavius-Josephus, an absurd tale which has never yet deceived any one but you. As to the predictions of Sambethe, the daughter of Noah, I should be very curious to know them, and Monsieur Mosaïde, who seems sparing enough of his words, would oblige me greatly by giving us a few by word of mouth, for it is not possible for him, I am glad to see, to utter them by the more hidden way through which the ancient Sibyls were accustomed to give utterance to their mysterious replies."

Mosaïde, who appeared not to have heard anything, suddenly said: "The daughter of Noah has spoken; Sambethe has said: 'The foolish man who laughs and mocks shall not hear the voice coming from the seventh tabernacle; and the impious shall go wretchedly to his ruin.'"

On this utterance all three of us took leave of Mosaïde.

XI

HAT year the summer was glorious, whence came a wish to wander afield. One day, as I strolled under the trees of the Cours-la-Reine, with two poor *écus* that I had found that morning in my breeches' pocket, and which were the first visible sign so far of my alchemist's munificence, I took a seat at the door of a coffee-house at a table whose small size befitted my solitude and my modesty, and there I fell a-thinking of the oddness of my fate, while on either side of me mousquetaires and gay ladies drank the wine of Spain. I questioned whether the Cross of Les Sablons, Monsieur d'Astarac, Mosaïde, the papyrus of Zozimus and my fine coat were not all dreams from which I should awake to find myself in dimity before the spit at the *Reine Pédauque.* I came out of my dream on feeling myself pulled by the sleeve. And I saw before me brother Ange, whose face was lost between his cowl and his beard.

"Monsieur Jacques Menétrier," said he, in a low voice, "a young lady who means you well awaits you in her carriage on the road between the river and the Porte de la Conférence."

My heart beat loudly. Startled and charmed with the adventure, I went immediately to the spot indicated by the capuchin, walking nevertheless with the measured step which seemed best to become me. Arrived on the quay I saw a coach and a little white hand on the edge of the door.

The door opened on my approach, and I was extremely surprised to find Mam'selle Catherine in the coach, in a rose-coloured satin dress, her head covered with a hood, her blond hair intermingled with the black lace.

Dumbfounded I hesitated at the step.

"Come in," she said, "and sit by me. Close the door, I pray you. You must not be seen. A moment ago, in passing by the Cours, I saw you at the coffee-house. I immediately sent the good brother to fetch you. I engaged him for my lenten practices, and I have kept him with me since, for in whatever condition one may be placed, one must cling to religion. You looked very well, Monsieur Jacques, seated before your little table, your sword across your knees, wearing the melancholy air of a man of quality. I have always had a friendly feeling for you, and I am not one of those women, who, in prosperity, despise their former friends."

"Eh, what! Mam'selle Catherine," I exclaimed, "this coach, these lackeys, this satin dress—"

"All come," said she, "from the kindness of Monsieur de la Guéritaude, who is in the Revenue department, and is one of our richest financiers. He has advanced money to the king. He is a good friend, whom I would not vex for anything in the world. But he is not as agreeable as you, Monsieur Jacques. He has also given me a small house at Grenelle, which I will show you one day from attic to cellar. Monsieur Jacques, I am very pleased to see you on the road to making your fortune. You shall see my bedroom, which is a copy of that of Mademoiselle Davilliers. It is all mirrors and china ornaments. How is your good father? Between ourselves, he neglected his wife

and his cook-shop a little. It is exceedingly wrong in a man of his position. But let us talk of you."

"Let us talk of you, Mam'selle Catherine," said I at last. "You are very pretty, and it is a great pity that you are so very fond of capuchins. For one must forgive you your Farmers-general."

"Oh," she said, "do not reproach me with brother Ange. I only keep him for my soul's good, and if I gave Monsieur de la Guéritaude a rival it would be—"

"It would be?"

"Do not ask me, Monsieur Jacques. You are ungrateful. For you know I always singled you out. But you took no notice of it."

"On the contrary, I was alive to your mockery, Mam'selle Catherine. You made me ashamed of my beardless chin. You told me many a time that I was a little stupid."

" 'Twas true, Monsieur Jacques, truer than you thought. Why did you not guess that I meant you well?"

"And you, Catherine, why were you so intimidatingly pretty? I dared not look at you. And then I saw one day that you were downright vexed with me."

"I had reason to be so, Monsieur Jacques. You preferred that Savoyarde with her handkerchief round her head, the very dregs of the Port St. Nicholas."

"Oh, do believe, Catherine, that it was neither taste nor inclination, but merely because she took strong means to conquer my bashfulness."

"Ah, my friend, believe me who am your senior, bashfulness is a great sin against love. But could you not see that beggar had holes in her stockings

and a flounce of mud and dirt half an ell wide at the hem of her skirt?"

"I saw it, Catherine."

"Did you not see, Jacques, that she was badly made, and what's worse, positively deformed?"

"I saw it, Catherine."

"You could actually love that beggar of a Savoyarde, you with your fair skin and distinguished manners."

"I cannot understand it myself, Catherine. It must have been that at the time my fancy was full of you. And if the mere thought of you gave me the hardihood and courage with which you reproach me to-day, judge of my transports, Catherine, if I had held you in my arms, or even a girl a little like you. For I loved you dearly."

She took my hand and sighed. I continued in a melancholy tone: "Yes, I loved you, Catherine, and I should love you still were it not for that disgusting monk."

She defended herself:

"What a suspicion. You make me cross. It is absurd."

"You do not love capuchins?"

"Fie!"

Not considering it opportune to press her too closely on the subject, I took her by the waist, we kissed one another, our lips met, and I felt my whole being dissolve in delight. After a moment of delicious abandon, she disengaged herself, her cheeks pink, eyes dewy and lips half-open. From that moment I have known how much a woman is beautified and adorned by the kisses one puts on her lips. Mine had made roses of the most delicate

tint bloom on Catherine's cheeks, and drowned the blue flower of her eyes in sparkling dew.

"You are a child," she said, replacing her hood. "Go along with you, You must not stay a moment longer. Monsieur de la Guéritaude will be here directly. He loves me with an impatience that is apt to forestall the hour of the appointment."

Then reading on my face the disappointment I felt, she pursued with tender vivacity:

"But listen, Jacques: he goes home every evening at nine o'clock to his old wife, who has become peevish with years, and no longer permits his infidelities now that she is beyond the possibility of paying them back. Her jealousy has become something terrible. Come at half-past nine to-night. I will receive you. My house is at the corner of the Rue du Bac. You will know it by its three windows on every floor and its rose-covered balcony. You know I have always loved flowers. Till to-night."

She put me from her with caressing gesture wherein she seemed to show her sorrow that I might not stay; then, finger on lips, she whispered once more:

"Till to-night."

XII

I DO not know how I managed to tear myself away from Catherine's arms. But it is certain that, in jumping out of the coach I nearly fell over Monsieur d'Astarac whose tall figure was planted like a tree on the edge of the path. I saluted him politely and evinced my surprise at so happy a chance.

"Chance," said he, "diminishes in proportion as knowledge is augmented: for me it does not exist. I knew, my son that I was to meet you here. I must have an interview with you which has been too long deferred. Let us, if you please, go in search of that solitude and silence necessary to the speech I wish to have with you. Do not look anxious. The mysteries that I shall unveil to you are sublime, it is true, but of a pleasing nature."

Having thus spoken he led me to the banks of the Seine hard by the Isle of Swans, which lifted itself in mid-stream like a leafy barque. There he signalled the ferry-man whose shallop bore us to the verdant isle, frequented only by a few pensioners who on fine days played at bowls and drank their glass of beer. Night lit her first stars in the sky and gave voice to the insects in the grass. The isle was deserted. Monsieur d'Astarac sat down on a wooden bench in a clearing at the end of a grove of walnuts, invited me to sit down by him and spoke in these words:

"There are three kinds of people, my son, from

whom the philosopher must hide his secrets. They are princes, because it would not be prudent to add to their might; the ambitious, whose pitiless driving power wants no re-inforcement; and the debauched, who would find in the hidden knowledge the means of glutting their worst passions. But I may bare my mind to you who are neither debauched, for I think nothing of the slip whereby a moment ago you fell into the arms of that young woman; nor ambitious, having lived till now content to turn the paternal spit. I can then without fear unfold to you the hidden laws of the universe. You must not suppose that life is confined within the narrow condition in which it manifests itself to vulgar eyes. When they teach that creation had man for end and object, your theologians and philosophers reason like the ground-lice in Versailles, or the Tuileries, who believe that the damp cellars are made for them, and that the rest of the *château* is quite uninhabitable. The solar system, taught by the canon Copernicus in the last century, following Aristarchus of Samos and the Pythagorean philosophers is, no doubt, known to you, for they have even made abridgements of it for the use of urchins at schools and dialogues for the chatterboxes in town. You have seen an instrument at my house which demonstrates it perfectly by means of a clock-work movement. Look up, my son, and see above your head the chariot of David drawn by Mizar and his two illustrious companions turning round the Pole, Arcturus, Vega in Lyra, Spica in Virgo, Ariadne's crown and its lovely pearl.

"These are suns. One glance at the world will show you that all creation is a work of fire and that

life under its highest forms must be nourished by flame.

"And what are the planets? Specks of mud, a little scum and ferment. Contemplate the stately choir of the stars, this gathering of suns. They equal or surpass our own in grandeur and in power, and when, some clear winter night, I show you Sirius through my glass, your eyes and your soul will be dazzled.

"Can you really, believe that Sirius, Altair, Regulus, Aldebaran, all these suns indeed, are merely luminaries? Can you believe that old Phœbus, who pours incessantly through space, wherein we swim, his immeasurable floods of heat and light, has no other function than to illuminate the earth and a few other imperceptible and contemptible planets? What a candle! A million time bigger than the house!

"I have been obliged to give you the idea to start with that the Universe is composed of suns, and that the planets that may be found there are less than nothing. But I foresee that you would raise an objection, and I will reply to it. These suns you were going to say burn out in the course of ages and become as dirt in their turn.

"Not so! I reply, for they are sustained by the comets that they draw to them and which fall into them. They are the habitation of the real life. The planets and this earth in which we live are but the dwelling-places of larvæ. Such are the truths which you must first absorb.

"Now that you understand, my son, that fire excels every other element, you will better grasp what I am about to explain to you, which is of more importance than anything you have learnt up to now

and even more than was ever known to Erasmus, Turnebus, and Scaliger. I will not refer to theologians like Quesnel * or Bossuet, who, between ourselves, are but of the dregs of humanity's intelligence, and have scarcely more understanding than a captain of horse. We will not lose time in despising such brains comparable in size and contents to wren's eggs, and we will come at once to the subject of my talk.

"Whereas creatures formed of clay do not surpass in beauty of form the degree of perfection attained by Antinous and Madame de Parabère, and the faculty of knowledge attained only by Democritus and myself, beings formed of fire enjoy a wisdom and an understanding whose range it is impossible for us to compass.

"Such, my son, is the nature of the glorious children of the suns, they are masters of the laws of the universe, as we of the rules of chess, and the course of the stars in heaven puzzles them no more than the movement on the chess-board of king, rook, and bishop, trouble us. These Genii create worlds in corners of space where they were not to be found before, and organise them to their liking. It affords them a momentary distraction from their chief business which is to mate, one with another, in ineffable love. Yesterday I turned my glass on the sign of Virgo and there I observed a distant vortex of light. No doubt, my son, but that it was the still unformed work of these beings of fire.

"Truth to tell the universe has no other origin. Far from being the result of a single will, it is the

* *Quesnel,* Pasquier. Jansenist theologian, b. Paris. His writings provoked the Bull "Unigenitus." 1634-1719.

result of a sublime caprice of a great number of Genii who have found recreation each in his good time and in his own way. So may we explain the diversity, the magnificence and the imperfection. For the powers and the clairvoyance of these Genii, though immense, have limits. I should deceive you did I say that a man, were he philosopher and mage, could enter into familiar intercourse with them. No one of them has ever manifested himself to me and all that I tell you of them is known to me but by induction and hearsay. Therefore, although their existence is certain I should go too far were I to describe to you their ways and their character. We must know our own ignorance, my son, and I pride myself on advancing but fully observed facts. We will then leave these Genii, or rather these Demiurges to their distant glories and come to the illustrious beings who concern us more nearly. And it is at this point, my son, that you must lend your ear.

"Speaking to you a moment ago of the planets, if I gave way to a sentiment of disdain it was because I was merely considering the skin and surface of these little balls or tops and the animals which scramble dismally thereon. I should have used another tone if my mind had contemplated along with the planets, the air and vapour which envelops them. For air is an element which only cedes to fire in nobility, whence it follows that the dignity and illustriousness of planets is in the air which bathes them. These mists, these clinging vapours, these zephyrs, these waves of blue, these moving isles of purple and gold, which pass above our heads, are the home of a worshipful race. We call them Sylphs and Salamanders. They are creatures

of infinite sweetness and beauty. It is possible, and it is fitting for us to form with them unions, whose delights cannot be dreamt of. Salamanders are of such a kind that beside them the prettiest person in town or at court is but a repulsive monkey. They yield themselves willing to philosophers. You have no doubt heard tell of the wondrous being by whom Monsieur Descartes was accompanied on his travels. Some said it was a natural daughter he took everywhere with him, others thought it was an automaton that he had made with inimitable art. In reality it was a Salamander that this able man had taken for his lady-love. He never left her. On one of his passages in the Dutch seas he took her on board shut in a box of precious wood lined with satin. The shape of this box and the precautions with which Monsieur Descartes handled it drew the attention of the captain, who, when Monsieur Descartes was asleep, lifted the lid and discovered the Salamander. This ignorant and coarse man thought that so marvellous a being must be the devil's handiwork. For very fear, he threw her in the sea. But as you can well believe the beautiful creature was not drowned and it was easy for her to rejoin her good friend Monsieur Descartes. She remained faithful to him as long as he lived, and on his death left this earth never to return.

"I cite this example among many others to acquaint you with the love of philosopher and Salamander. This love is too sublime to be subjected to contracts, and you will agree that the ridiculous farrago and apparatus of our marriage would not be the right thing in such unions. Truly, it would be a pretty thing if a bewigged notary and a fat

curé were to put their noses into it! These gentlemen are fit only to set the seal to the vulgar union of man and woman. The hymeneals of Salamander and sage are borne witness to in more august fashion. They are celebrated by the aërial peoples in aëry navies, which, borne on gentle zephyrs, glide on invisible waves to the sound of harps, their poops bedecked with roses. But do not run away with the notion that because they are not inscribed in a thumbed register in a dirty sacristy such troth is not enduring, or may be broken with facility. The Spirits are its sureties, who sport among the clouds, whence flashes the lightning and bursts the thunder. I make revelations which will be of use to you, my son, for I have already recognised by indications not to be mistaken that you are destined for the bed of a Salamander."

"Alas! Monsieur," I cried, "this destiny terrifies me, and my scruples on the subject are nearly as great as those of the Dutch captain who threw Monsieur Descartes's pretty friend into the sea. I cannot help thinking as did he that these aërial ladies are demons! I should fear to lose my soul for them, for, in fine, Monsieur, such marriages are contrary to nature, and opposed to divine law. Would that Monsieur Jérôme Coignard, my good master, could hear you! I am quite certain that he would uphold me with good arguments against the seductions of your Salamanders, and against your eloquence."

"Abbé Coignard," said Monsieur d'Astarac, "translates Greek admirably. Let him stick to his books. He is no philosopher. As for you, my son, you argue with the feebleness of ignorance, and the weakness of your arguments afflicts me.

These unions you say are contrary to nature. What do you know about it? And what means can you have of knowing about it? How is it possible to distinguish what is natural from what is not? Do we know enough of universal Isis to discern what is in accord with her and what runs counter to her? But let us put it better; nothing runs counter to her, and all is in accord, for nothing exists which does not enter into the play of her organism nor follow the innumerable poses of her body. Whence, I ask you, could enemies come who would offend her? Nothing acts against her or without her, and forces that seem to work against her are but manifestations of her own life.

"Only the ignorant can have sufficient assurance to say whether an action be natural or not. But let us for a moment enter into their point of view and their prejudice, and pretend to allow that it is possible to commit acts against nature. Will these acts on that account be bad, or must they be condemned? I am prepared to hear on this point the common opinion of moralists who represent virtue as a restraint on instincts, an effort against the inclination that we all have in us, a struggle in fact against the original man. By their own showing virtue is contrary to nature, and from this it proceeds that they cannot condemn an action, whatever it may be, for what it has in common with virtue.

"I have made this digression, my son, to the end that I might show you the pitiable frivolity of your arguments. I cannot insult you by believing that you have any remaining doubts on the innocence of the carnal intercourse that men may hold with Salamanders. Know henceforth, that far from being forbidden by the laws of religion, such marriages

are ordained by that law to the exclusion of all others. I will now give you manifest proof."

He stopped speaking, took his box from his pocket, and helped his nose to a pinch of snuff.

Night had fallen. The moon shed her liquid light on the river which shimmered beneath it, touched too with the glancing light of the lamps. Flights of gnats swarmed round us in airy spirals. Shrill insect voices rose amid the universal silence. Such sweetness fell from heaven that the starlight seemed to be suffused with milk.

Monsieur d'Astarac continued in this wise:

"The Bible, my son, and principally the books of Moses contain great and useful truths. This opinion seems absurd and unreasonable in consequence of the treatment that theologians have meted out to what they call the Scripture, which by their commentaries, explanations, and meditations, they have made a manual of mistakes, a volume of absurdities, a storehouse of imbecilities, a collection of lies, a string of follies, a school of ignorance, a treasury of everything inept, and the lumber-room for all stupidity and wickedness. You must know that it was in its origin a temple of celestial light.

"I have been fortunate enough to re-establish it in pristine splendour. And truth compels me to state that Mosaïde has greatly helped me by his understanding of the language and alphabet of the Hebrews. But do not let us lose sight of our main subject. Learn, first of all, that the meaning of the Bible is figurative, and that the chief error of theologians has been to take literally what must be understood as symbolical. Bear that truth in mind throughout the rest of my discourse.

"When the Demiurge we call Jehovah, who also

possesses many other names since we apply to him generally all the terms expressing quantity and quality, had, I do not say created the world, for that would be a foolish thing to say, but made straight a little corner of the universe to make a dwelling-place for Adam and Eve, there were to be found in space creatures of a subtle nature which Jehovah had not formed—would have been incapable of forming. They were the work of various other Demiurges more ancient than he and more cunning. His artifice did not yet go beyond that of a very able potter capable of moulding beings, such as we are, in clay, as you fashion pots. What I say of him is not to depreciate him, for such a work is still far beyond human power.

"But one cannot fail to notice the inferior quality of the work of the seven days. Jehovah worked, not in fire which alone gives birth to master-pieces of life, but in clay wherefrom he could produce but the handiwork of a clever ceramist. We are nothing, my son, but animated pottery. One cannot reproach Jehovah with having any illusions about his work. If he found it good at first and in the ardour of composition, he was not slow in recognising his error, and the Bible is full of the expression of his discontent, which often grew to ill-humour and sometimes even to anger. Never did artisan treat objects produced by his industry with more disgust and aversion. He thought of destroying them and indeed he drowned the greater part of them. The deluge, the memory of which has been proved a last deception for the unhappy Demiurge preserved by the Jews, the Greeks, and the Chinese, who, soon recognising the uselessness and ridiculousness of such violence, fell into discouragement

and apathy, which has not ceased since the day of Noah but has progressed to the extreme degree of the present day. But I see I look too far ahead. It is the drawback of these vast subjects that one cannot confine oneself to them. Our mind abandoning itself in them acts like the children of the stars who pass at one bound from universe to universe.

"Let us return to the earthly paradise where the Demiurge had placed the two vessels shaped by his hand: Adam and Eve. They did not live alone there among the animals and plants. Spirits of air created by the Demiurges of the fire floated above them, and looked on them with curiosity mingled with sympathy and pity. It was just what Jehovah had foreseen. To his praise let it be said he had reckoned on the Genii of the fire, to whom we can henceforth give real names of Elves and Salamanders, to improve and complete his little figures of clay. He had said to himself in his prudence, 'My Adam and Eve, opaque, and sealed in clay, lack air and light. I did not know how to give them wings. But by uniting themselves with Elves and Salamanders created by a Demiurge more powerful and subtle than I, they will give birth to children who will derive from the people of light, as well as from the race of clay, and will bear in their turn children more luminous than themselves, until at last their posterity shall nearly equal in beauty the sons and the daughters of air and fire.'

"Truly he had neglected nothing to draw the attention of the Sylphs and Salamanders to his Adam and Eve. He had modelled the woman to the shape of an amphora with a harmony of curved lines which sufficed to show him a prince of Geom-

eters, and he succeeded in redeeming the coarseness of the material by the magnificence of the form. Adam he had moulded with a hand less light but firmer, shaping his body with such justness and according to such perfect proportions that, applied later by the Greeks to architecture, these lines and measurements made all the beauty of their temples.

"So you see, my son, Jehovah tried according to his powers to render his creatures worthy of the ethereal embrace he hoped for them. I lay no stress on the pains he took to make these unions fruitful. The economy of the sexes bears sufficient witness to his wisdom in this respect. And at first he could congratulate himself on his cunning and address. I have said that the Sylphs and Salamanders looked on Adam and Eve with that curiosity, that sympathy, and that tenderness which are the first ingredients of love. They drew near, and were taken in the cunning snares which Jehovah had set, and spread for them in and on the bellying bodies of the amphoræ. The first man and the first woman enjoyed during centuries the delectable embraces of the Genii of the air, which preserved them in eternal youth.

"Such was their lot, such should be ours. Why did the parents of the human race, tired of these sublime delights, seek illicit pleasure the one with the other? But what would you have, my son? Moulded in clay, they loved the mud whence they came. Alas! they knew one another, even as they had known the Genii.

"This is what the Demiurge had expressly forbidden them. Dreading, and with reason, that they would produce children heavy, dull, and earth-

bound, as themselves, he had forbidden them, under strictest penalty, to approach one another. It is the meaning of those words of Eve's: 'But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden God hath said Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.' For you can well understand, my son, the apple which tempted the luckless Eve was not the fruit of the apple-tree, and therein lies an allegory whose meaning I have explained to you. Although imperfect, and sometimes violent and capricious Jehovah was a Demiurge, and too intelligent to vex himself about an apple or a pomegranate. To uphold such extravagant imaginings one must be a bishop or a capuchin. And the proof that the apple was what I have said it was is that Eve was visited with the punishment suited to her fault.

"It was not said to her, 'In sorrow shalt thou eat of it,' but: 'In sorrow thou shalt bring forth.' Now what connection, I ask you, can there be between an apple and the pains of child-birth? On the contrary, the punishment is exactly fitted if the fault were such as I have explained it.

"There, my son, is the true explanation of original sin. It teaches you your duty, which is to keep away from women. The fondness which draws you to them is fatal. All children born in this fashion are foolish and wretched."

"But, Monsieur," I cried, stupefied, "is another way then possible?"

"Happily," said he, "a great many are born from the union of men with the Spirits of air. And such are clever and beautiful. Thus were born the giants spoken of by Hesiod and Moses. Thus was born Pythagoras, whom the Salamander, his

mother, endowed with a golden thigh. Thus was born Alexander the Great, said to be the son of Olympias and a serpent. Scipio-Africanus, Aristomenes of Messenia,* Julius Cæsar, Porphyry,† the emperor Julian who re-established the worship of fire, abolished by Constantine the Apostate; Merlin the Wizard, born of a Sylph and a nun, daughter of Charlemagne; St. Thomas Aquinas, Paracelsus, and more recently Monsieur Van Helmont." ‡

I promised Monsieur d'Astarac, as this was the case, to lend myself to the advances of a Salamander, could one be found so obliging as to wish for me. He assured me I should not only find one, but twenty or thirty, among whom I should have but the difficulty of choosing. And less by desire to put it to the test than to please him, I asked the philosopher how it were possible to put oneself in communication with these aërial beings.

"Nothing is easier," he replied. "It needs but a crystal ball, whose use I will explain to you. I keep by me a fairly large number of these balls, and I will give you all the necessary directions before long in my study. But that is enough for today."

He rose and moved to the boat, where the ferryman waited us, stretched on his back and snoring to the moon. Once we had touched the bank he was soon at a distance, and was quickly lost to sight in the darkness.

* *Aristomenes of Messenia.* General, 7th century B.C.
† *Porphyrius.* Platonic philosopher, 234–304.
‡ *Van Helmont,* J. B. Flemish physician, b. Brussels, 1577–1644.

XIII

HIS long interview left me the confused feeling of a dream; I was more alive to the thought of Catherine. In spite of the sublimities that I had been hearing I longed to see her, and that although I had not supped. I was not so penetrated by the philosopher's notions that I was in any way out of taste with this pretty girl. I was resolved to push my good fortune to a finish before falling to the possession of one of those handsome furies of the air, who allowed no earthly rivals. My dread was lest, at so late an hour of the night, Catherine should be tired of waiting for me. Making my way along the river and crossing the Pont Royal at full speed, I rushed down the Rue du Bac. A minute later I reached the Rue de Grenelle, where I heard cries mingled with the clash of swords. The noise came from the house Catherine had described to me. There, on the pavement, shadows and lanterns were flickering and voices arose:

"Help! Jesus! They murder me! Have at the monk. . . . Forrard on! To him . . . Jesus and Mary help! Look at the precious rascal! Have at him! To him, boys, to him! Let him have it!"

Windows opened in the surrounding houses and showed heads bonnetted with night-caps.

All this tumult and rout passed suddenly across

me like a forest chase and I recognised brother Ange who was making off with such speed that he kicked himself with his sandalled feet as he ran, while three great strapping lackeys armed like the Swiss guard, pressing him close pricked his hide with the points of their halberts. Their master, a young gentleman, thick-set and red of face, ceased not to encourage them with voice and gesture as one sets on the hounds.

"To him! . . . to him! . . . Strike home! . . . He's a tough brute!"

When he was near me:

"Ah Monsieur," I said, "you have no pity!"

"Monsieur," he replied, "obviously it is not your mistress this capuchin has caressed, and it was not you who surprised Madame here in the arms of this malodorous beast. Her financier is all very well—there are things that are understood. But a monk is not to be endured. Look at the bold impudent hussy."

And he showed me Catherine in her night-dress in the doorway, her eyes glittering with tears, dishevelled, wringing her hands, more beautiful than I had ever seen her, and murmuring in a languishing voice which cut me to the heart:

"Do not kill him! It is brother Ange, it is the little brother."

The ruffianly lackeys came back announcing they had given up the chase on seeing the watch, but not without having first felt their pikes half a finger deep in the back of the holy man. The night-caps disappeared from the windows, which shut again, and while the young lord talked with his men I approached Catherine whose tears were drying on her cheeks in the pretty creases of her smile.

"The poor brother has escaped," she said. "But I trembled for him. Men are terrible. When they love you they will listen to nothing."

"Catherine," I replied rather piqued, "did you ask me to come here merely to assist at your friends' quarrels? Alas! I have no right to take part in them."

"You would have, Monsieur Jacques, you would have, if you wished."

"But," said I again, "you are the most sought-after person in all Paris. You have never spoken to me of this young gentleman."

"Neither did I think of him. He came by surprise."

"And he surprised you with brother Ange."

"He thought he saw what did not exist. He is so hot-headed and will not listen to reason."

Her night-dress, half open, showed amid its lace a bosom full as a ripe fruit and flowering to a rose-bud. I took her in my arms and covered her breast with kisses.

"Heavens!" she cried, "and in the street too, before Monsieur d'Anquetil, who is looking at us!"

"Who is he? Monsieur d'Anquetil?"

"The murderer of brother Ange, pardi! Who else do you suppose?"

"Truly, Catherine, others are not needful; your friends are gathered round you in sufficient force."

"Monsieur Jacques, I pray you do not insult me!"

"I am not insulting you, Catherine, I acknowledge your attractions, to which I do but wish to pay the same homage as do so many others."

"Monsieur Jacques, what you say smells odiously of your good father's cook-shop."

"You were formerly well content Mam'selle Catherine, to smell that smoke."

"Fie, you villain! You mean wretch! To insult a woman!"

As she began to screech and to get excited, Monsieur d'Anquetil left his men and came to us, pushed her into the house calling her a shameless hussy and a good-for-nothing, followed her into the passage and shut the door in my face.

XIV

HE thought of Catherine filled my mind during the whole week following this unlucky adventure. Her likeness shone on the leaves of the folios over which I bent in the library beside my good master; so much so that Photius, Olympiodorus, Fabricius and Vossius, spoke to me but of a little lady in a lace night-gown. These visions inclined me to idleness. But indulgent to others as to himself Monsieur Jérôme Coignard smiled benevolently on my trouble and distraction.

"Jacques Tournebroche," the good man said to me one day, "are you not struck by the variations of the moral law throughout the ages? The books gathered together in this admirable Astaracian library bear witness to man's uncertainty on this subject. If I offer some reflections thereon, my son, it is to fix in your mind this sound and salutary thought, that there is no good conduct outside religion, and that the maxims of the philosophers who pretend to set up a code of natural morals are but whim-whams and crotchets. The wherefore for right conduct is not to be found in nature, who, of herself, is indifferent, ignoring evil as well as good. It is written in the Holy Scriptures that one must not transgress, at least not without suitably repenting afterwards. Human laws are founded on utility, and that can be but apparent and illusive utility, for one does not know instinctively what is of use to man or what really befits him. And

again, in our Code of Usage a good part of the articles are born of prejudice alone. Upheld by the threat of punishment human laws may be eluded by ruse and dissimulation. Every man capable of thought is above them. They are in fact but snares for the foolish.

"Such is not the case my son, with divine laws. These latter are imprescriptible, ineluctable, and stable. Their absurdity is but apparent, and hides a wisdom we cannot grasp. If they offend our reason it is because they are superior to it and because they accord with the true ends of man and not with the ends which are apparent to him. It is well to observe them when one is fortunate enough to recognise them. At the same time I make no difficulty about confessing that the observation of these laws contained in the Decalogue and in the commandments of the church, is difficult at most times, and even impossible without grace, which is often delayed, since it is our duty to long for it. Hence we are all miserable sinners.

"And here it is indeed that we should admire the system of the Christian faith, which bases salvation principally upon repentance. It is to be observed, my son, that the greatest saints were the penitents, and as repentance is in proportion to the fault, in the greatest sinners is found the stuff of the greatest saints. I could illustrate this doctrine with a great number of admirable examples, but I have said enough to make you understand that the primary substance of saintliness is concupiscence, incontinence, every impurity of the flesh and spirit. It needs but, having collected your material together, to work it up according to the theological art, to shape it, so to speak, into the form of re-

pentance, which is the affair of years, of days, and sometimes even of a single moment, as may be seen in the case of perfect contrition. Jacques Tournebroche, if you have well understood me, you will not wear yourself out in wretched efforts to become an honest man according to the way of the world, but you will apply yourself solely to the satisfying of divine justice."

I did not fail to recognise the great wisdom enshrined in the maxims of my good master. I only feared that this morality, were it followed without discrimination would bring upon men the worst disorders. I shared my doubts with Monsieur Jérôme Coignard who reassured me as follows:

"Jacobus Tournebroche, you take no notice of what I have just particularly told you, to wit, that what you call disorders are such in fact only in the opinion of lawyers and judges whether civil or ecclesiastical, and in reference to human laws which are arbitrary and transitory, and, in a word, that to live according to these laws is the mark of a sheepish intelligence. A man of parts does not pride himself on acting according to the laws in force at the Châtelet and under the eye of the judge. He only concerns himself with the salvation of his soul, and he does not think himself dishonoured if he gets to heaven by some one of the crooked paths followed by the greatest saints. If the blessed Pelagia had not practiced the profession by which you know Jeannette the viol-player gains her livelihood under the porch of *St. Benôit-le-Bétourné,* that saint would not have had occasion for her full and ample repentance, and it is extremely probable that, after having lived as a matron in average and commonplace goodness, she would not at this moment be

playing the psaltery before the tabernacle where the Holy of Holies rests in glory. Do you call so beautiful a dispensation of a predestinated life, disorder? Not so. Let us leave such base figures of speech to Monsieur the lieutenant of police, who after death will not perhaps find the meanest place behind the wretched women he drags ignominiously to-day to the reformatory. Save the loss of one's soul and eternal damnation, there should be no disorder nor crime nor any evil in this perishable world, where everything should be adjusted and governed with an eye to the world to come. Admit, then, Tournebroche my son, that acts the most reprehensible in man's opinion may lead to a good end, and do not try to reconcile the justice of men with that of God, which alone is just, not indeed to our perceptions but in very surety. For the moment you will oblige me, my son, by looking up in Vossius the meaning of five or six obscure terms employed by the Panopolitan with whom one must wrestle in the darkness, in the insidious manner which dismayed even the great heart of Ajax, according to Homer, prince of poets and historians. These old alchemists had a rough-hewn style; Manilius, if Monsieur d'Astarac does not mind my saying so, wrote on these same subjects with more elegance."

My good master had scarcely uttered these last words when a shadow rose between us. It was that of Monsieur d'Astarac, or rather it was Monsieur d'Astarac himself, thin and black as a shadow.

Whether he had not overheard the conversation, or whether he disdained to notice it, he showed no resentment; on the contrary, he congrat-

ulated Monsieur Jérôme Coignard on his zeal and knowledge, and he added that he counted on his insight for the completion of the greatest work ever undertaken by man. Then turning to me, he said:

"My son, I beg you to come down to my study for a moment, where I wish to communicate to you a secret of some importance."

I followed him into the room where he had first received us, my good master and me, the day he took us into his service. I found once again the old Egyptians with their gilded faces standing against the walls. A glass globe the size of a pumpkin stood on the table. Monsieur d'Astarac let himself drop on to a sofa and signed to me to sit down in front of him, and having passed his hand, laden with precious stones and amulets, across his brow, said:

"My son, I do not do you the injustice of thinking that after our interview on the Isle of Swans any doubt can remain to you as to the existence of Sylphs and Salamanders, which is just as real as that of men, and even much more so if one counts its reality by the duration of the apparitions through which it shows itself, for their life is far longer than ours. Salamanders carry their unchangeable youth from century to century; some of them have seen Noah, Menes * and Pythagoras. The plenitude of their remembrances and the freshness of their memory make their conversation extremely attractive. It has been imagined that they acquired their immortality in the arms of mortals, and that the hope of avoiding death drew them to the couch of philosophers. But these are

* *Menes.* Legendary first king of Egypt.

falsehoods which cannot deceive a reflective mind. Every union of the sexes, far from assuring immortality to lovers, is an evidence of death, and we should never know love were we destined to live for ever. It cannot be otherwise for the Salamanders, who seek in the arms of the sages but one kind of immortality—that of the race. It is also the only one that it is reasonable to hope for. And although I have promised myself, with the help of science, notably to prolong human life, and to spread it over five or six centuries at least, I have never flattered myself that I could ensure its duration indefinitely. It would be insensate to combat the natural law. Reject, my son, as vain tales, the idea of immortality drawn from a kiss. It is the shame of various cabalists ever to have thought such a thing. It is none the less true that Salamanders are inclined to the love of man. You will have experience of it without delay. I have sufficiently prepared you for their visit and since you have had, from the night of your initiation, no impure dealings with women, you shall now receive the reward of your continence."

My candid nature suffered uneasily a praise I merited only in spite of myself, and I thought of owning my culpable desires to Monsieur d'Astarac. But he left me not time to confess, and continued with vivacity:

"There only remains to give you the key, my son, which will open to you the kingdom of the Genii. And I will do it straight away."

And getting up he put his hand on the globe which occupied half the table.

"This ball," he said, "is full of star dust which escapes your sight by its very purity. For it is far

too rare to be palpable to the gross sense of man. So it is, my son, that the more beautiful side of the universe hides itself from our vision, and only reveals itself to the *savant* who is furnished with the apparatus proper to discover it. The rivers and the plains of the air, for instance, remain invisible to you, though in reality they are a thousand times more rich and varied in aspect than those of the most beautiful of earthly landscapes.

"Know then that in this globe there is a star dust of sovereign property to exalt the fire that is within us. And the effect of the exaltation makes itself felt at once. It consists in a sublety of the senses which allows us to see and to touch the aërial shapes floating round about us. As soon as you have broken the seal which closes the opening of this globe, and inhaled the star dust which will escape therefrom, you will find in this room one or more creatures like to women in the system of curved lines which form their bodies, but far more beautiful than ever woman was, and who are, in truth, Salamanders. There is no doubt that the one which I saw last year in your father's cook-shop will appear to you first, for she has a liking for you, and I would advise you to satisfy her desires as soon as possible. So sit down comfortably in this armchair before the table, unseal the globe, and inhale its contents gently. You will soon see all that I have described to you take shape by degrees. I will now leave you. Farewell."

And he disappeared after his fashion, which was strangely sudden. I remained alone, before this globe of glass, hesitating to uncork it for fear that some stupefying exhalation should escape. I thought that perhaps Monsieur d'Astarac might

have introduced therein, according to his art, some vapour which should send to sleep those who breathed it and set them dreaming of Salamanders. I was not yet philosopher enough to care to be happy in such fashion. Perhaps, I said to myself, these fumes induce madness. In fact I was distrustful enough to think for a moment of going to the library to ask advice of my good master, Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard. But I recognised immediately that it would be taking useless trouble. As soon as he heard me speak, I told myself, of star dust and Genii of the air, he would reply, "Jacques Tournebroche, my son, be mindful never to put faith in absurdities, but to bring everything to the test of your reason save in the matter of our holy religion. Let be these globes and powders along with all the other follies of the cabala and the spagyric art."

I thought I could hear him making this little speech between two pinches of snuff, and I knew not what to reply to such Christian language. On the other hand, I foresaw and considered in what embarrassment I should find myself before Monsieur d'Astarac when he should ask me what news of the Salamander? What should I reply to him? How could I confess my reserve and my abstention, without at the same time betraying my suspicion and my fear? And then again, in spite of myself, I was curious to try such an adventure. I am not credulous. On the contrary, I have a prodigious leaning to doubt, and this propensity induces me to defy common sense and even evidence along with it. To everything that is told me I say to myself why not? Before the crystal globe this "why not?" did insult to my natural intelligence. This

"why not" inclines me to credulity and, it is worthy of note here, that to believe nothing is to believe everything, and one must not keep too open and free a mind lest perchance it should become a storehouse for adventure, and stuff should lodge there of extravagant form and weight which could find no place in minds sensibly and commonplacedly furnished with beliefs. While with my hand on the waxen seal I remembered what my mother had told me of magic bottles my "why not?" whispered to me that perchance after all one might see in this astral dust aerial sprites. But as soon as this notion, having set foot in my mind, inclined to lodge there and recline upon itself, I found it odd, absurd and grotesque. Ideas, when they lay hold of one soon become impertinent. Few of them are capable of being anything but passing fancies, and certainly this one had an air of folly. While I still asked myself, Shall I open it? Shall I not open it? the seal, which I had not ceased to press between my fingers, broke suddenly in my hand, and behold the bottle was uncorked!

I waited and I watched. I saw nothing and I felt nothing. I felt cheated, so facile and prompt to slip into our minds is the hope of over-reaching nature! Nothing! Not even a vague or confused illusion, or uncertain image. What I had foreseen had happened. What a deception! I felt a kind of chagrin. Lying back in my arm-chair I swore to myself before the surrounding Egyptians with their long black eyes to shut my mind closer in future against the lies of cabalists. Once again I acknowledged the wisdom of my good master and I resolved on his example to guide myself by reason

in all matters not relating to the Christian and Catholic faith. To have expected the visit of a Salamander-lady, what a simpleton! Could there possibly be Salamanders? But what does one know of such things? and "why not?"

The atmosphere, heavy since mid-day, was become overpowering. Torpid from long, peaceful, and secluded days I felt a weight on my brow and on my eyelids. The coming storm quite bore me down. I let my arms fall, and with head thrown back and closed eyes I slid into a half-slumber full of gilded Egyptians and lascivious shades. This uncertain condition, during which the feeling of love burnt in me as a fire in the night, lasted for I know not how long, when I was awakened by a light sound of steps and of rustling material. I opened my eyes and gave a loud cry.

A marvellous creature stood before me, robed in black satin, her hair decked with lace, dark, with blue eyes, well-marked features, a young pure skin, rounded cheeks and a mouth breathing an invisible kiss. Her short dress showed little feet, light and instinct with gaiety and movement. She held herself erect, rounded, and a trifle thickset in her voluptuous perfection. One could see a small square of her neck under the velvet band tied round her throat, and it was dark but dazzling. She looked at me with an air of curiosity.

I have said that my sleep had given me thoughts of love. I rose up. I sprang towards her.

"Excuse me," she said, "I was looking for Monsieur d'Astarac."

I replied: "Madame, there is no question of Monsieur d'Astarac. There is but you and I. I

was waiting for you. You are my Salamander. I have opened the crystal bottle. You have come. You are mine."

I took her in my arms and covered with kisses all of her that my lips could meet above the opening of her bodice.

She disengaged herself and said.

"You are mad."

"It is very natural," said I, "who would not be, in my place?"

She looked down, blushed and smiled. I threw myself at her feet.

"Since Monsieur d'Astarac is not here," she said, "I must withdraw."

"Stay," I cried, and bolted the door.

She asked me, "Do you know if he will return shortly?"

"No, Madame, he will not come back for long enough. He has left me alone with the Salamanders. I desire but one. It is you."

I took her in my arms, I bore her to the sofa, I dropped down with her, I covered her with kisses, I was no longer conscious of myself. She cried out, I did not listen to her. Her open palms repulsed me, her nails scratched me, and her vain defence but sharpened my desires. I clasped her, I enfolded her, over-borne, and undone. Her yielding body ceded to me; she closed her eyes. I soon felt in my triumph her beautiful arms forgivingly enfold me.

Then, unlocked alas! from this delicious embrace, we looked on one another with surprise. Anxious to recover her propriety she smoothed her skirts and was silent.

"I love you," said I. "What is your name?"

I did not think she was a Salamander, and truth to tell I had never really thought so.

"I am called Jael," she said..

"What! you are Mosaïde's niece?"

"Yes, but say nothing. If he knew . . ."

"What would he do?"

"Oh! nothing to me. But much harm to you. He does not love Christians."

"And you!"

"Oh! I—I do not love Jews."

"Jael, do you love me a little?"

"It seems to me, Monsieur, after what we have expressed to one another, that your question is an insult."

"It is true, Mademoiselle, but I hope that you will pardon a haste and an ardour which was not careful to consult your feelings."

"Oh, Monsieur, do not make yourself out more guilty than you are. All your violence and all your ardour would not have served you had you not pleased me. A moment ago, seeing you asleep in that arm-chair, I thought you deserving. I waited your awakening, and you know the rest."

I answered her with a kiss. She returned it. What a kiss! I thought the wild wood-strawberry melted in my mouth! My desires re-awoke, and I pressed her ardently against my heart.

"This time," said she, "do not let yourself be so carried away, and do not think only of yourself. One must not be an egoist in love. That is what young men do not well understand. But one teaches them."

We dived again into the depths of delight. Afterwards the adorable Jael said to me:

"Have you a comb? I look like a witch."

"Jael," said I, "I have no comb; I was expecting a Salamander. I adore you."

"Adore me, my friend, but with discretion. You do not know Mosaïde."

"Why, Jael, is he so terrifying, at a hundred and thirty years of age, and seventy-five of them passed in a pyramid?"

"I see, my friend, that you have heard tales about my uncle, and that you have been simple enough to believe them. Nobody knows his age; I am ignorant of it myself. He has been old as long as I have known him. I only know that he is robust and of no common strength. He was a banker at Lisbon, where he happened to kill a Christian whom he had surprised with my aunt Myriam. He fled and took me with him. Since then he has borne a mother's love towards me. He talks to me as one talks to little children, and he weeps as he watches me sleep."

"Do you dwell with him?"

"Yes, in the keeper's cottage at the other end of the park."

"I know, one follows the mandragora path. How comes it I have not met you before? By what melancholy chance have I, although so near to you, lived without seeing you? But do I say lived? Is it life to live without knowing you? You are kept close then in this cottage?"

"It is true that I live very secludedly, and that I cannot go for walks or shopping or to the plays as I should like. Mosaïde's affection for me allows me no freedom. He keeps me jealously, and in all the world he loves but me, and six little gold cups that he brought from Lisbon. As he is far more attached to me than he was to my aunt Myriam, he

would kill you, my friend, with a better will than he killed the Portuguese. I warn you of it to make you discreet, and because it is not a consideration which will give pause to a man of mettle. Are you a man of quality and born of a good family?"

"Alas, no," I replied, "my father practises one of the mechanic arts, and is in a kind of business."

"Is he in the Revenue? Has he any office of profit? No? . . . That's a pity. So one must love you for yourself alone. But tell me the truth: Will not Monsieur d'Astarac soon be here?"

At this name, at this query, a horrible doubt crossed my mind. I suspected that this ravishing young woman, Jael, had been sent by the cabalist to play the *rôle* of a Salamander to me. I even secretly accused her of playing the Nymph to this old madman. To be immediately enlightened on the subject, I asked her roughly, if she were in the habit of playing the Salamander in the castle?

"I fail to understand you," she answered, looking at me with eyes full of innocent surprise. "You speak like Monsieur d'Astarac himself, and I should think you infected with his complaint had I not proved that you do not share his aversion from women. He cannot abide them, and it is a real embarrassment to me to see him and to speak to him. Nevertheless, I was looking for him a short time ago when I found you."

In my joy at being thus reassured I covered her with kisses. She managed to let me see that she wore black stockings, fastened above the knee with diamond-buckled garters, and the sight of them turned my mind to fancies which pleased her. On her side, she led me on with much skill and warmth of affection, and I felt the spirit of play beginning

to wake in her at a moment when I began to weary of it. However, I did my best and was again happy in being able to spare this delightful person the affront that she least deserved. It seemed to me she was not ill-pleased with me. She rose up with a tranquil mien and said:

"Do you not really know whether Monsieur d'Astarac will soon be back? I will confess to you I came to ask him for a small sum of money owing on my uncle's pension, of which for the moment I am in great need."

I apologetically pulled three *écus* from my purse which she did me the kindness to accept. It was all that was left to me from the too rare generosities of the cabalist, who, professing to disdain money, unluckily forgot to pay my wages.

I asked Mademoiselle Jael if I should not have the good fortune to see her again.

"You shall," she said.

And we arranged that she should come to my room at night whenever she could make her escape from the cottage where she was kept.

"Only take care," said I, "my door is the fourth on the right in the corridor, and the fifth is that of my good master, Abbé Coignard. The others," added I, "merely lead to the attics, which accommodate two or three of the scullions, and many hundreds of rats."

She assured me she would take care to make no mistake, and that she would tap at my door and no other.

"For the matter of that, your Abbé Coignard seems to me to be a very good sort of man. I think we have nothing to fear from him. I saw him through a peephole the day he came with you

to see my uncle. He seemed to be amiable, though I could scarcely hear what he said. His nose, in particular, seemed clever and capable. He who bears it must be a man of resource, and I should like to make his acquaintance. There is always something to be had from the society of men of parts. I am only sorry that he displeased my uncle by his freedom of speech and his jesting humours. Mosaïde hates him, and he has a capacity for hatred quite unimaginable by a Christian."

"Mademoiselle," I replied, "Monsieur l'Abbé Jérôme Coignard is a very learned man, and he is moreover a philosopher and a benevolent one. He knows the world, and you are right in thinking his counsel worthy of following. I live entirely under his guidance. But tell me, did you not see me also that day from your peephole in the cottage?"

"I saw you," said she, "and I will not deny that I saw you very plainly. But I must return to my uncle. Farewell."

Monsieur d'Astarac did not fail to ask me that night after supper for news of the Salamander. His curiosity embarrassed me not a little. I answered that the meeting had surpassed my hopes, but that beyond that I thought it my duty to keep the reserve fitting in adventures of the kind.

"This discretion, my son," said he, "is not as necessary as you think. Salamanders do not require secrecy on the subject of amours of which they are not ashamed. One of these Nymphs, who loves me, has no dearer pastime in my absence than to cut my initials entwined with hers on the bark of the trees, as you may satisfy yourself by examining the trunks of five or six pines whose graceful tops you can see from here. But have you not

noticed, my son, that this kind of love, so sublime, far from leaving one fatigued imparts fresh vigour to the heart? I am sure that after what has passed you will busy yourself to-night by translating at least sixty pages of Zozimus the Panipolitan."

I confessed that, on the contrary, I felt a great desire to sleep, which he explained by the surprise of a first interview. And so the great man rested assured that I had had dealings with a Salamander. I felt scruples about deceiving him, but I was obliged to, and, indeed, he so deceived himself that one could scarcely add much to his illusions. So I sought my couch in peace of mind: and having got to bed, I blew out my candle and closed the sweetest day of my life.

XV

AEL kept her word. No later than the day after the morrow she came tapping at my door. We were much more at home in my room than we had been in Monsieur d'Astarac's study, and what took place at our first meeting was but child's play compared with what love inspired us with at our second. She tore herself from my arms at the break of day with a thousand vows to join me soon again, calling me her life, her soul, and her pet.

I got up very late that day. When I went down to the library my good master was seated before the papyrus of Zozimus, his pen in one hand, his magnifying glass in the other, and worthy the admiration of any one who can appreciate learning and letters.

"Jacques Tournebroche," he said to me, "the principal difficulty in reading this lies in the fact that various of the letters may easily be confounded with others, and it is needful to success in deciphering it, to draw up a table of the characters which lend themselves to mistakes of this kind; for unless we take this precaution we risk the adoption of wrong readings, to our eternal shame and just vilification. I have made some laughable blunders this very day since matins. I must have had my mind distracted by what I saw last night, which I will tell you about. Having woke up in the early dawn I felt a desire for a draught of that light

white wine which, you will remember, I complimented Monsieur d'Astarac on yesterday. For there is a sympathy, my son, between white wine and cock-crow dating certainly from the time of Noah, and I feel certain that if St. Peter, during the curséd night he spent in the courtyard of the high-priest, had drunk a finger of clear Moselle wine or even of that of Orleans, he would not have denied Jesus before the cock crew twice. But we must in no wise regret this ill deed, my son, for it was necessary that the prophecies should be fulfilled; and if Peter, or Cephas, as he was called, had not that night committed the worst of infamies he would not be to-day the greatest saint in Paradise and the corner-stone of our holy Church, to the utter confusion of the good people of this world who see the keys of their eternal happiness held by a cowardly good-for-nothing. Oh! wholesome example! which draws man from the fallacious inspirations of human honour and leads him in the way of salvation! O wise system of religion! O divine wisdom which exalteth the humble and the meek and putteth down the mighty! Oh marvel! Oh mystery!

"To the eternal shame of the Pharisees and lawyers, a coarse fisherman from the lake of Tiberias, who, by his clumsy cowardice had become the laughing-stock of the wenches in the high-priest's kitchen, where they warmed themselves side by side, a boor and a coward who denied his master and his faith before dirty wenches far less pretty than the chambermaid of the bailiff's household at Séez, wears on his brow the triple crown, on his finger the pontifical ring, is set above the princes of the church, kings, and emperor, and is invested with the

power to bind and to loose; the most respectable man, the most worthy woman, can enter heaven only if he give them access to it. But tell me, Tournebroche, my son, how far had I got in my narrative when I lost my thread running after the great Saint Peter, prince of Apostles. I am almost sure I was speaking of a glass of white wine that I drank at dawn. I went down in my night garments to the store-room and drew from a certain cupboard, of which I had thoughtfully obtained the key the night before, a bottle, which I emptied with enjoyment. Afterwards, on going upstairs, I met between the second and third floors a little lady in white, who was going down. She seemed very frightened and fled to the end of the corridor. I followed her, I caught her up, I seized her in my arms and kissed her, suddenly and irresistibly attracted by her. Do not blame me, my son, you would have done the same in my place, perhaps even more. She was a pretty girl, she was like the bailiff's chambermaid, but with more sparkle in her eye. She did not dare cry out. She whispered in my ear: 'Let me go! let me go! you are mad!' Look, Tournebroche, I still bear the marks of her nails on my wrists. Had I but kept the impression of her kiss as vividly on my lips!"

"What, Monsieur l'Abbé," I exclaimed, "she gave you a kiss?"

"Rest assured, my son," replied my good master, "that had you been in my place you would have received one as good, had you seized the opportunity as I did. I think I told you that I held the young lady in a close embrace. She tried to get away, she stifled her cries, she murmured lamentations.

" 'I beseech you to let me go. Here is the dawn, a moment longer and I am lost.'

"Her fears, her terror, her peril, what savage would not have been touched by them? I am not inhuman. I gave her her liberty at the price of a kiss which she gave me at once. I give you my word I have never received a more delicious one."

At this point of his story my good master raised his nose to inhale a pinch of snuff and saw my trouble and my distress, which he took for surprise.

"Jacques Tournebroche," he continued, "what I have still to tell you will surprise you even more. With regret I let the pretty lass go, but my curiosity impelled me to follow her. I went downstairs after her. I saw her cross the vestibule, go out by the little door which opens on to the fields on the side where the park stretches out widest, and run down the path. I ran after her. I thought she could not go far in night-garb and night-cap. She took the mandragora path. My curiosity redoubled and I followed her as far as Mosaïde's cottage. At that moment that wicked Jew appeared at the window, in his robe and his great cap, like those figures you see appear when mid-day strikes on old clocks, more ridiculous and Gothic than are the churches which preserve them for the pleasure of the country bumpkins and the profit of the verger.

"He discovered me under the greenwood at the very moment when the pretty girl, swift as Galatea herself, slipped into the cottage. So that I had exactly the appearance of pursuing her in the manner and style of the Satyrs we spoke of one day when discussing some fine passages in Ovid. And my dress helped the likeness, for, I think I told

you, my son, I was in my night-garments. At the sight of me Mosaïde's eyes glittered. He drew from his dirty yellow cloak a useful-looking stiletto and brandished it out of the window with an arm which seemed by no means weighed down with age. Meanwhile he swore at me bi-lingually. Yes, Tournebroche, my knowledge of grammar authorises me to state that his curses were bi-lingual, and Spanish, or rather Portuguese, was mingled with Hebrew. It angered me that I could not catch the exact meaning, for I do not understand these languages although I can recognise them by certain sounds which constantly recur. But it is very likely that he accused me of corrupting this girl who is I believe his niece Jael, whom Monsieur d'Astarac, you may remember, has mentioned to us several times. Wherein his invectives conveyed something of flattery; for such as I have become my son, what with the passing of time and the fatigues of a troubled life I do not pretend any longer to the love of young maidens. Alas! unless I become a bishop it is a dish whose flavour I shall never know again. I regret it. But one must not be too strongly attached to the perishable things of this world and we must renounce what renounces us. Mosaïde, then, handling his stiletto, poured hoarse sounds from his throat alternating with shrill screeches, so that I was insulted and vituperated in form of chant or canticle. And without vanity, my son, I may say I was treated as a corrupter and a loose fellow in a solemn and ceremonious tone. When Mosaïde came to the end of his imprecations, I endeavoured to make a riposte bi-lingual, like the attack. I accused him in Latin and in French of homicide and sacrilege, of having cut the throats

of little children and poignarded the sacred host. The early morning breeze playing round my legs reminded me that I was in my nightshirt. I felt somewhat embarrassed, for it is very evident, my son, that a man who wears no breeches is in a poor position to explain the sacred truths, to confound error and follow up crime. All the same I drew him a terrible picture of his outrages and menaced him with both divine and human justice.

"What! my good master," I cried, "this Mosaïde, who has so pretty a niece, has cut the throats of new-born children and poignarded the sacred host?"

"I know nothing of that," replied Monsieur Jérôme Coignard, "and can know nothing of it. But those crimes are his, being those of his race, and I may attribute them to him without doing him wrong. I followed this up with a long list of scoundrelly ancestors for the old wretch. For you are not ignorant of what is said of the Jews and their abominable rites. In the old cosmography of Munster * there is a plate representing Jews mutilating a child, and they are recognisable by the wheel of cloth they bore on their garments as a sign of disgrace. Nevertheless, I do not think it was an every-day and household usage among them. I also doubt whether all these Jews should be so given to outraging the sacred elements. To accuse them of it is to believe them as deeply penetrated as ourselves with the divinity of Our Saviour Jesus Christ. For one cannot imagine sacrilege without faith, and the Jew who stabbed the sacred host, by doing so rendered a sincere homage

* *Munster,* Sebastian. Author of "Cosmographia Universalis," b. Ingelheim, 1489-1552.

to the truth of transubstantiation. Those are all fables we may leave to the ignorant, my son, and if I threw them in the face of that horrible Mosaïde, it was less from the considered beliefs of a sound scholarship than from the swift promptings of resentment and anger."

"Ah, Monsieur," I replied, "you might have satisfied yourself with reproaching him with the Portuguese he killed from jealousy, for that was a real murder."

"What!" exclaimed my good master, "Mosaïde has killed a Christian. Tournebroche, we have in him a dangerous neighbour. But you will draw the conclusion that I myself draw from this adventure. It is certain that his niece is Monsieur d'Astarac's light of love, whose room she was surely leaving when I met her on the stairs.

"I have too much religion not to regret that such a charming person should belong to the race which crucified Jesus Christ. Alas! there is no room for doubt, my son, this wicked Mordecai is uncle to an Esther who has no need to bathe for six months in myrrh before she be worthy of the couch of a king. This magic-working old crow is not at all suitable for such a beauty, and I feel an interest in her waking in me. Mosaïde must hide her with the utmost secrecy, for were she seen one day at court or at the play, she would have all the world at her feet on the morrow. Do you not wish to see her, Tournebroche?"

I replied that I should like to very much, and we buried ourselves once more in our Greek.

XVI

NE evening my good master and I finding ourselves in the Rue du Bac, he said to me, for it was a warm night: "Jacques Tournebroche, my son, how would it suit you to turn up here to the left, up the Rue de Grenelle, and look for a cabaret? We must also find a landlord who sells wine at two *sous* the pot, for I am devoid of money, and I think you are no better provided than I am, my son, by fault of Monsieur d'Astarac, who may make gold but who gives none to his servants and his secretaries, as far as can be seen in our case. The state he leaves us in is distressing. I am not worth a penny, and I see that my own industry or cunning must make good this formidable ill. It is very fine to bear poverty with an equal mind, as did Epictetus, and gained thereby an imperishable glory. But it is a practice I am tired of, and it has become tedious by its very sameness. I feel it is high time that I tried some other virtue, and that I practised myself in the art of possessing wealth without wealth possessing me, which is a very noble state of things, and the best that a philosopher can attain to. I would gladly come by something, were it only to show that my wits did not desert me even in prosperity. I seek the means, you see me pondering thereon, Tournebroche, my son."

While my good master was speaking in this elegant fashion we approached the pretty house where

Monsieur de la Guéritaude had established Catherine. "You will know it," she had said to me, "by the roses on the balcony." It was not light enough for me to see the roses, but I thought I could scent them. A few paces further and I recognised her at the window, a jug of water in her hand, watering her flowers. At the same moment she recognised me in the street below, and she laughed and blew me a kiss. Whereupon a hand appearing at the window gave her a smack on the cheek which so surprised her that she dropped the jug of water which all but fell on my good master's head. Then the buffeted fair one disappeared, and the buffeter, taking her place at the window, leant over the railing and called out:

"God be praised that you are not the capuchin! I cannot endure my mistress blowing kisses to that evil-smelling beast who prowls for ever under the window. At least I need not blush for her taste this time. You seem to me to be an honest fellow, and I think that I have seen you before. Do me the honour to come up. There is supper prepared within. You will do me pleasure if you will share it, along with Monsieur l'Abbé there, who has just received a potful of water on his head and is shaking himself like a wet dog. After supper we will play cards, and as soon as it is light we will go and cut each other's throats. But that will be out of pure politeness and only to do you honour, Monsieur, for truth to tell, this young woman is not worth a sword-thrust. She is a hussy whom I never wish to see again."

I recognised him who spoke thus as Monsieur d'Anquetil, whom I had lately seen encouraging his men so actively to prick brother Ange in the rear.

He spoke civilly, and treated me as a gentleman. I felt the favour he did me in consenting to cut my throat. My good master was no less affected by such urbanity. Having shaken himself sufficiently, he said:

"Jacques Tournebroche, my son, we cannot refuse such a gracious invitation."

Two lackeys had already descended with torches. They led us to a room where a cold collation was spread on a table lighted by two silver candelabra. Monsieur d'Anquetil begged us to be seated, and my good master tied his napkin round his neck. He had already impaled a lark on the end of his fork when the sound of sobbing smote our ears.

"Take no notice of those cries," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "they come from Catherine, whom I have shut up in her room."

"Ah, Monsieur! you must forgive her," said my good master, gazing sadly at the little bird at the end of his fork. "The most succulent dishes taste bitter when seasoned with tears and cries. How have you the heart to let a woman cry? Be indulgent to this one, I implore you. Is she then so guilty for having blown a kiss to my young pupil, who was her neighbour and her companion in the simple time of their youth, when the charms of this pretty girl were only known in the arbour of the *Petit Bacchus?* There is nothing therein but what is innocent, if it so be that any human action, and more particularly the action of a woman can be entirely innocent and free from original sin. Allow me also to tell you, Monsieur, that jealousy is a Gothic sentiment, a melancholy remnant of barbarous customs, which should find no place in an elegant and well-bred mind."

"Monsieur l'Abbé," replied Monsieur d'Anquetil, "from what do you conclude that I am jealous? I am not. But I will not allow a woman to make light of me."

"We are the playthings of the winds," said my good master with a sigh. "Everything laughs at us, sky, stars, rain, breezes, light and shade, and woman herself. Allow Catherine to sup with us, Monsieur. She is pretty, she will enliven your table. All that she may have done, that kiss and what more, makes her no less pleasing to look upon. Woman's infidelities do not mar her face. Nature, who delights in decking them, is indifferent to their faults. Imitate her, Monsieur, and forgive Catherine."

I joined my prayers to those of my good master, and Monsieur d'Anquetil consented to liberate the prisoner. He went to the door whence the cries came, opened it, and called Catherine, who replied merely by renewed lamentations.

"Messieurs," her lover told us, "she is there lying flat on her chest on her bed, her head buried in the pillow, and making ridiculous contortions at every sob. Look at her! There is the sort of thing for which we make ourselves so unhappy and commit so many follies! . . . Catherine, come to supper!"

But Catherine did not budge, and continued crying. He went and took her by the arm, by the waist. She resisted. He became urgent: "Come then, come, my darling!"

She stayed obstinately where she was, holding on to the bed and the mattress.

Her lover lost patience at last, and cried in a rough voice, with many oaths, "Get up, you wench."

She immediately got up and, smiling amid her tears, took his arm and came into the dining room, a not unhappy victim. She sat down between Monsieur d'Anquetil and me, her head on her lover's shoulder, and seeking my foot with hers under the table.

"Messieurs," said our host, "I trust you will forgive an impetuous action I cannot regret since it gives me the honour of entertaining you here. I really cannot put up with all the caprices of this charming young woman, and I have become very suspicious since I surprised her with her capuchin."

"My friend," said Catherine, pressing my foot with hers, "your jealousy is at fault. Know then, that I have no fancy for any one but for Monsieur Jacques."

"She mocks me," said Monsieur d'Anquetil.

"Have no doubt about that," I replied. "One can see she loves but you."

"Without vanity," he answered, "I think I have inspired her with some interest. But she is a coquette."

"A drink!" said Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard.

Monsieur d'Anquetil passed the demi-john to my good master, and exclaimed as he did so:

"Pardi l'Abbé, as you belong to the Church you can perhaps tell us why women love monks?"

Monsieur Coignard wiped his lips and said:

"The reason is that monks love with humility, and lend themselves to anything. Another reason is that their natural instincts have not been weakened by taking thought or by having any care for their manners. This is a generous wine, Monsieur."

"You do me too much honour," replied Mon-

sieur d'Anquetil. "The wine is Monsieur de la Guéritaude's. I took his mistress from him, I may well take his bottles."

"Nothing could be fairer," replied my good master. "I see, Monsieur, that you are not a man to stand on convention."

"Do not praise me more than is fitting, l'Abbé," answered Monsieur d'Anquetil. "My birth renders easy to me what would be difficult for the vulgar. A common man is forced to put restraint on all his actions. He is the slave of a strict uprightness, but a gentleman has the honour to fight for his king and for his own pleasure. That dispenses him from troubling himself about silly trifles. I have served under Monsieur de Villars,* and I fought in the war of succession, and I risked being killed for no reason at the battle of Parma. Surely it is a small matter that in return I beat my men, defraud my creditors, and, should it please me, steal my neighbour's wife or his mistress."

"You speak like a nobleman," said my good master, "and you are jealous to uphold the prerogatives of nobility."

"I have none of those scruples," continued Monsieur d'Anquetil, "which intimidate the mass of mankind and which I hold useful merely to give halt to the fearful and to restrain the discontented."

"Well and good," said my excellent master.

"I do not believe in virtue," said the other.

"You are right," said my good master. "Seeing the way in which the human animal is made he could not be virtuous without some deformity. Look at this pretty girl for instance who is supping

* *Villars,* Louis Hector de. Marshal of France, commanded at Malplaquet, 1653-1734.

with us: her little head, her beautiful throat, her charmingly rounded form and all the rest. In what corner of her person could a grain of virtue find lodgment? There is no room, all is so firm, so full of sap, plump and well filled. Virtue like the raven lives among the ruins. It is to be found in the lines and wrinkles of the body. I myself, Monsieur, who since my childhood have pondered the austere maxims of religion and philosophy, I have been unable to insinuate any virtue in myself save by the breaches made by suffering and age in my constitution. And yet each time I have been filled less with virtue than with pride. So I am in the habit of praying to the Creator of the world in this wise: 'My God, keep me from virtue if it remove me from holiness.' Ah, holiness! that is what it is possible and needful to attain to! There is the goal that befits us! May we reach it one day! In the meanwhile, give me something to drink."

"I will confide to you that I do not believe in God," said Monsieur d'Anquetil.

"For once I think you are to blame, Monsieur," said the Abbé. "One must believe in God and in all the truths of our holy religion."

Monsieur d'Anquetil cried out: "You are laughing at us, l'Abbé, and you take us to be far more foolish than we are. I tell you I neither believe in God nor devil, and I never go to Mass unless to the king's Mass. Priestly discourses are but old wives' tales, only endurable, if then, in the days when my grandmother saw the Abbé de Choisy, dressed as a woman, distributing the blessed bread in the church of St. Jacques-du-Haut-Pas. There

may have been such a thing as religion in those days. There is none now, thank God!"

"In the name of all the saints and devils do not speak thus, my friend," exclaimed Catherine. "God exists as certainly as this pie is on the table, and the proof is that one day last year, finding myself in great poverty and distress, on brother Ange's advice, I burnt a candle in the church of the capuchins, and on the morrow I met Monsieur de la Guéritaude out walking, who gave me this house with all its furniture and the cellar full of wine that we are now drinking, and enough money to live honestly."

"Fie! Fie!" said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "the foolish wench drags God into her wretched affairs! It is so shocking that it offends one even though one be an atheist."

"Monsieur," said my good master, "it is infinitely better to drag God into one's wretched affairs, as does this simple-minded girl, than after your fashion to turn Him out of the world He has created. If He did not especially send that fat money-dealer to Catherine, He at least allowed her to meet him. We are ignorant of His ways, and what this innocent being says contains more truth, notwithstanding some admixture and alloy of blasphemy, than all the vain speeches spouted by the impious from an empty heart. There is nothing more detestable than this libertinage of mind displayed by the youth of to-day. Your words make one shudder. Shall I answer them with proofs drawn from holy books and the writings of the Fathers? Shall I make you listen to the Almighty as He spoke to the patriarchs and the prophets? *Sicut locutus est Abraham et*

semini ejus in sæcula? Shall I unroll the traditions of the Church before your eyes? Shall I invoke the authority of the two Testaments against you? Shall I overwhelm you with the miracles of Christ? And His words as miraculous as His acts? No. I will not take up these holy weapons. I fear too greatly to profane them in this combat, which is not serious. The Church warns us in her prudence that edification should not be made an occasion for scandal. Therefore I shall remain silent, Monsieur, on the subject of the truths on which I was fed at the foot of the altar. But without doing violence to the pure modesty of my soul, and without exposing the sacred mysteries to profanation, I will show to you the Almighty ruling over the reason of mankind, I will show you Him in pagan philosophy and even in the speeches of the impious. Yes, Monsieur, I will make you recognise that you profess Him in spite of yourself even while you pretend that He does not exist. For you will grant that if there is an ordering of things in this world it is a divine ordering, and flows from the source and fountain of all order."

"I grant you that," replied Monsieur d'Anquetil, lying back in his armchair and stroking his leg, which was well turned.

"Mind what you say then," continued my good master. "Even while you say that God does not exist, what are you doing but stringing thoughts together, marshalling your reasons and manifesting in yourself the primary cause of all thought and all reason, which is God? And can one even attempt to establish the fact that He does not exist without making conspicuous by this worst of all arguments, which is nevertheless an argument, some remnant

of the harmony that He has established in the universe?"

"L'Abbé," replied M. d'Anquetil, "you are an amiable sophist. One knows nowadays that the world is but the work of blind chance, and we must no longer speak of Providence since the physicists have seen winged frogs in the moon by the aid of their glasses."

"Well, Monsieur," answered my good master, "I am in no wise troubled that there should be winged frogs in the moon; such marsh-fowl are suitable inhabitants for a world which has not been sanctified by the blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. I confess we know but a small part of the universe, and may be as Monsieur d'Astarac says, who by the by, is quite mad, this world is but a spot of mud in an infinity of worlds. May be Copernicus, the astronomer, was not altogether dreaming when he announced that the earth is not the mathematical centre of the universe. I have read that an Italian, called Galileo, who perished miserably, also thought as did Copernicus, and to-day we see little Monsieur de Fontenelle * in accordance with this way of thinking. But these are but vain imaginings fitted merely to disturb weak minds. What matters it that the physical world should be larger or smaller, of one shape or of another? It suffices that it has but to be envisaged through the light of intelligence and reason for God to appear manifest in it.

"If the meditations of a sage can be of any use to you, Monsieur, I will teach you how this proof of God's existence, better than the proof that St.

* *Fontenelle,* Bernard Le Bovier de. Nephew of Corneille, secretary of the Academy of Sciences, 1657–1757.

Anselm gives us, and quite independent of those proofs which come from Revelation, appeared to me suddenly in all its clearness. It was at Séez, twenty-five years ago, I was librarian to my lord-bishop, and the library windows overlooked a yard where I saw a kitchen maid scouring Monseigneur's pots and pans every morning. She was tall, young, and strong. A light down shaded her upper lip, and lent a provocation and a charm to her face. Her tangled hair, her thin bust, and long bare arms were as suitable to Adonis as to Diana, in fact she was a boyish beauty. I loved her for it. I loved her strong red hands. In a word this girl filled me with a desire as strong and savage as herself. You know how overmastering such feelings are. I made mine known to her from my window with few words and signs. She let me understand more briefly still that she responded to my sentiments and gave me a *rendez-vous* for the following night in the loft, where she slept on the hay by the kindness of Monseigneur whose dishes she washed. I awaited the coming of night with impatience. When at length she enfolded the earth I took a ladder and climbed up to the loft where the girl awaited me. My first thought was to embrace her, my second to admire the chain of events which had led me to her arms. For after all, Monsieur, a young divine, a kitchen maid, a ladder, a bundle of hay! What a sequence! what an ordering of things! What a just meeting of pre-established harmonies! What a linking of cause and effect! What a proof of the existence of God! That is what struck me so strangely, and I rejoice at being able to add this profane demonstration to the rea-

sons supplied by theology which are moreover amply sufficient."

"L'Abbé," said Catherine, "the worst part of your story is that the girl had no bosom. A woman with no bosom is like a bed without a pillow. But d'Anquetil, don't you know what we might do now?"

"Yes," he said, "play at ombre, which requires three people."

"If you want to," she continued. "But I pray you, my friend, call for pipes. Nothing is pleasanter than to smoke a pipe of tobacco while drinking wine."

A lackey brought some cards, and the pipes, which we lighted. The room was soon filled with a thick smoke amidst which our host and Monsieur L'Abbé Coignard played solemnly at piquet.

Luck favoured my good master till the moment when Monsieur d'Anquetil thought he saw him for the third time marking fifty-five when he had but forty, and called him a Greek, a card-sharper and a knight of the road, and threw a bottle at his head, which broke on the table and deluged it with wine.

"You will have to give yourself the trouble of opening another bottle," said the Abbé, "for we are very thirsty."

"Willingly," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "but you must know, my Abbé, that a gentleman does not mark points that he has not made, and does not force cards except at the king's table, where all sorts of people are met to whom one is under no obligation. Everywhere else it is villainous. Do you want to be taken for an adventurer then, Abbé?"

"It is a remarkable thing," said my good master, "that at cards or dice people blame a practice recommended in the arts of war, in politics, and business, where one prides oneself on correcting a turn of ill-fortune. It is not that I do not pride myself on my honesty at cards. I am exact in my dealings thank God, and you were dreaming, Monsieur, just now when you thought you saw me mark points that I had not scored—were it otherwise I should invoke the example of the Bishop of Geneva of blessed memory, who made no scruples about cheating at cards. But I cannot help reflecting that men are more punctilious at cards than in serious matters and that they bring more honesty to bear on trictrac, where it is a passable hindrance and leave it out in battles or in treaties of peace where it would be troublesome. Ælian,* Monsieur, has written a book in Greek on the subject of stratagem, showing to what excess ruse may be carried by great leaders."

"L'Abbé," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "I have not read your Ælian, and shall not read him as long as I live, but I have been to the wars as every good gentleman has. I served the king for eighteen months. It is the noblest of callings. I will tell you exactly wherein it consists.

"It is a secret I may well confide to you since there is no one to hear me but you, some bottles, Monsieur, whom I am going to kill presently, and this girl here who is taking off her clothes."

"Yes," Catherine said, "my chemise is enough, I'm so hot."

"Well, then," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "war,

* *Ælian.* Greek writer on Military Tactics, 3rd century.

whatever the gazettes may say, simply consists in stealing chickens and pigs from the peasants. When soldiers are on campaign that is all they think about."

"You are quite right," said my good master, "and in the old days in Gaul they used to call the soldier's doxy Madame Lightfinger. But I would beg of you not to kill my pupil, Jacques Tournebroche."

"L'Abbé," replied Monsieur d'Anquetil, "I'm obliged in honour to do so."

"Ouf!" said Catherine, arranging the lace of her chemise at her throat, "now I feel better."

"Monsieur," continued my good master, "Jacques Tournebroche is of great help to me in a translation of Zozimus the Panopolitan, which I have undertaken. I should be infinitely obliged to you if you would not fight with him until after this great work is achieved."

"I do not care a fig for your Zozimus," replied Monsieur d'Anquetil, "I don't care a fig. You hear me, l'Abbé? I care no more than did the king for his first mistress," and he began to sing:

> To shape the youthful squire of horse,
> Steady in stirrup and set on his course,
> The wits of woman must help him perforce—
> Laire, lan, laire.

"Who is this Zozimus?"

"Zozimus, Monsieur," replied the Abbé, "Zozimus of Panopolis, was a learned Greek who flourished in Alexandria in the third century of the Christian era, and wrote treatises on the spagyric art."

"How do you think that affects me?" replied Monsieur d'Anquetil, "and why do you translate him?"

Strike the iron while 'tis hot
Quoth she, nor let her be forgot
Whose title was the Sultan's fair—
Laire, lan, laire.

"Monsieur," said my good master, "I grant you that there is no real use in doing so, and that it will not affect the course of the world. But in illustrating, with notes and commentaries, this treatise, which the Greek composed for his sister Theosebia. . . ."

Catherine interrupted my good master's discourse by singing in a shrill voice:

In spite of jealousy and rebuke
I'd see my husband made a duke,
I'm sick of the sight of his desk and chair—
Laire, lan, laire.

"I contribute," went on my good master, "to the treasures of knowledge amassed by learned men, and I add my stone to the monument of true history which is rather that of maxims and opinions than of wars and treaties; for, Monsieur, the nobility of man. . . ."

Catherine resumed:

I can hear the public murmuring
I know the sort of ballad they'll sing,
The vulgar herd—but it's my affair—
Laire, lan, laire.

Notwithstanding her my good master continued . . . "lies in his thought, and having regard to that it is not a matter of indifference to ascertain what idea of the nature of metals and of the qualities of matter this Egyptian had formed."

Monsieur l'Abbé Jérôme Coignard drank a great draught of wine while Catherine took up her song:

> Pleasant to win the style of lord
> Whether or no by naked sword,
> If the end be fair, the means are fair—
> Laire, lan, laire.

"L'Abbé," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "you drink nothing—what is more you talk wild nonsense. In Italy during the war of succession I was under the orders of a brigadier who translated Polybius. But he was an idiot. Why translate Zozimus?"

"If you want to know all," said my good master, "I find therein a certain sensuality."

"Well and good," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "but how can Monsieur Tournebroche help you, who at this moment is caressing my mistress?"

"By the knowledge of Greek," said my good master, "which I have imparted to him."

Monsieur d'Anquetil then turned to me and said, "What Monsieur, you know Greek! Then you are not a gentleman?"

"Monsieur," I replied, "my father is the banner bearer to the Confraternity of Parisian Cooks."

"That makes it impossible for me to kill you, Monsieur. I beg you to excuse me. But, l'Abbé, you are drinking nothing. You have deceived me. I thought you were a good toper, and I wished you

to be my chaplain when I should have a house of my own."

Nevertheless Monsieur Coignard was drinking out of the bottle and Catherine leant towards me and whispered in my ear: "Jacques—I feel that I shall never love any one but you."

These words, coming from a pretty person in her chemise, troubled me extremely, but Catherine put the finishing touch to my intoxication by making me drink out of her glass, which passed unnoticed in the confusion of a supper which had mounted to all our heads.

Monsieur d'Anquetil, breaking the neck of the bottle against the table, filled us fresh bumpers, and from that moment on I could not give an account of what was said and done around me. All the same I saw that Catherine had traitorously poured a glass of wine down her lover's back between the neck and the coat collar. Monsieur d'Anquetil replied by pouring two or three bottles over the young lady in the chemise, whom he thus turned into a sort of mythological figure, of the damp family of Nymphs and Naiads. She cried with rage and twisted herself about convulsively. At the same moment we heard heavy raps from the door-knocker in the silence of the night whereupon we all became suddenly still and dumb like enchanted guests. The knocks soon redoubled in strength and frequency, and Monsieur d'Anquetil broke the silence first by asking out loud with dreadful oaths, who this troublesome person might be. My good master, who in the most ordinary occurrences was often inspired with admirable maxims, rose up, and said with unction and solemnity,

"What matters whose the hand that knocks so roughly against the closed door for a vulgar and possibly ridiculous motive; let us not ask, and let us take these blows as struck at the door of our hardened and corrupted souls. Let us say at each astounding blow: that is to warn us to amend our ways and think of our salvation which we neglect in the pursuit of pleasure; that is to make us disdain the good things of this world; that is to make us think on eternity. Thus, we shall obtain all possible profit from an occurrence otherwise slight and of but small account."

"You are amusing, l'Abbé," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "with the vigour with which they knock they will burst in the door," and indeed the knocker rattled like thunder.

"They are brigands," cried the wine-sopped Catherine. "Jesus! we shall be massacred! it is our punishment for having turned out the little brother. I have told you a hundred times, d'Anquetil, ill-luck comes to the house whence they drive a monk."

"Stupid," replied d'Anquetil, "this cursed friar makes her believe all the silliness he wishes. Thieves would be more polite, or at least more discreet. It is more likely the watch."

"The watch! But that is worse still," said Catherine.

"Bah!" said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "we will thrash them."

My good master put a bottle in one pocket just for precaution and another bottle in the other pocket for equilibrium, as the story says. All the house shook under the furious blows of the knocker.

Monsieur d'Anquetil, whose soldierly qualities were awakened by this attack, cried out, "I will go and reconnoitre the enemy."

Stumbling as he went he ran to the window where he had so lately and so liberally boxed his mistress's ears, and then came back into the dining-room bursting with laughter.

"Ha! ha!" he cried, "do you know who is knocking? It is Monsieur de la Guéritaude in a claw-hammer wig, with two big lackeys bearing lighted torches."

"Impossible!" said Catherine, "by this time he is sleeping by the side of his elderly wife."

"Then it is his very ghost," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "and we must believe that the ghost has taken the Revenue officer's wig. Even a spectre could not imitate it so well, for it is so absolutely comic!"

"Do you really mean it? Are you not joking?" said Catherine; "is it really Monsieur de la Guéritaude?"

"It is he himself, Catherine, if I am to believe my eyes."

"Then I am lost," exclaimed the poor girl. "How unlucky women are. They never can leave us in peace. What will become of me? Messieurs, will you not hide yourselves in different cupboards?"

"That might be done," said Abbé Coignard, "but how are we to take with us these empty bottles —for the most part broken, or at any rate with their necks knocked off, the débris of the demi-john, which Monsieur flung at my head, the cloth, the pasty, the plates, the candelabra, and the chemise of Mademoiselle here, which, owing to the

wine with which it is soaked has become but a pink and transparent veil for her beauty?"

"It is true that idiot has wet my chemise," said Catherine, "and I shall catch cold. But it would perhaps suffice were we to hide Monsieur d'Anquetil in the upper room. I will pass off the Abbé as my uncle and Monsieur Jacques as my brother."

"Not so," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "I will beg Monsieur de la Guéritaude myself to sup with us."

We implored him—my good master, Catherine, and myself—to do nothing of the kind; we besought him, we hung on his neck. All in vain. He seized a light and went down the steps. We followed him trembling. He opened the door. Monsieur de la Guéritaude stood there as he had described him to us in his wig, between two lackeys armed with torches. Monsieur d'Anquetil bowed ceremoniously to him and said:

"Do us the favour to come inside, Monsieur. You will meet some charming and uncommon people. A turnspit to whom Mademoiselle Catherine blows kisses from her window, and an Abbé who believes in God."

And he bowed low.

Monsieur de la Guéritaude was a tall withered man, little inclined to that kind of pleasantry, which irritated him exceedingly, and his anger was visibly increased by the sight of my good master, unbuttoned, a bottle in his hand and two others in his pockets, and by the appearance of Catherine in her damp and clinging chemise.

"Young man," said he to Monsieur d'Anquetil, coldly angry, "I have the honour to know your esteemed father, with whom I shall to-morrow consider to what town the king should send you to

meditate on your disgraceful behaviour and your impertinence.

"The worthy gentleman, to whom I have lent money which I do not press for, can refuse me nothing. And our well-beloved prince, who is in exactly the same position as your father, is inclined to do me favour. So that is settled. I have put through more difficult things in my time, thank God! As to this young woman, since it is hopeless to expect better ways of her, before mid-day to-morrow I shall speak two words to Monsieur the head of the police, who, I know, is full willing to send her to the reformatory. I have no more to say to you. This house is mine. I have paid for it, and I mean to enter it."

Then turning towards his lackeys, and designating my good master and me with the point of his stick, he said: "Throw those two drunkards out."

Monsieur Jérôme Coignard was commonly of exemplary sweetness, and he was in the habit of saying that he owed this gentleness to the vicissitudes of his life, fortune having treated him like the pebbles that the sea polishes by rolling them in its ebb and flow. He bore insults calmly, as much through a Christian spirit as through philosophy. But what helped him most was his great contempt for mankind, from which he did not except himself. Nevertheless, this time he was angry out of all proportion, and entirely forgot his prudence.

"Hold your tongue! vile money-grubber!" he cried, waving his bottle like a club. "If these rogues dare come near me, I will break their heads, to teach them to respect my cloth, which bears sufficient witness to my sacred character." In the torch-light, shining with perspiration, rubicund, his

eyes starting from his head, his coat open, and his great paunch half out of his breeches, my good master seemed the sort of fellow who would not easily be driven into a corner. The rogues hesitated.

"Drag him out!" cried Monsieur de la Guéritaude to them. "Drag out this wine-skin! Do you not see you only have to push him into the gutter, and he'll stay there until the sweepers come to throw him on the dust-heap? I would drag him out myself were I not afraid to soil my clothes."

My good master fiercely resented these insults.

"Odious tax-gatherer!" said he, in a voice fit to echo in a church, "infamous hanger-on; savage sweater of the people! You pretend that this house is yours? If you want people to believe you, if you want them to know it is yours, write up over the door this word from the Gospel: *Aceldama,* which means, the price of blood. Then, bowing low, we will allow the master to enter his dwelling. Thief, bandit, homicide, write with the charcoal I will throw in your face, write with your dirty hand over the door your owner's title. The price of the blood of the widow and the orphan, the price of the blood of the just, *Aceldama.* If not, stay outside and leave us within, usurer."

Monsieur de la Guéritaude, who had never heard anything like this in his life, thought he had to do with a madman, as he might well believe, and rather to protect himself than to make an attack, he raised his big stick.

My good master, beside himself, flung his bottle at the Revenue officer's head, who fell full length on the pavement, crying out "He has killed me!" And as he was swimming in the wine out of the bottle it looked as if he had been assassinated.

His two lackeys wanted to fling themselves on the murderer, and one of the two, a stout fellow, thought he had him, when Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard gave him such a blow in the stomach with his head that the fool rolled in the gutter beside the financier.

He got up for his sins, and arming himself with a lighted torch threw it down the passage whence his enemy had fallen on him. My good master was no longer there, he had already fled the spot.

Monsieur d'Anquetil was there still with Catherine, and he it was who received the lighted torch in his face. This insult seemed unbearable to him: he drew his sword and plunged it into the body of the unlucky rogue, who thus learnt to his cost that it does not do to attack a gentleman.

Nevertheless my good master had not made twenty paces down the road before the second lackey, a long spidery-legged beggar, commenced running after him, calling to the watch, and crying "Stop him."

He gained on him, and at the corner of the Rue Saint Guillaume we saw him stretch his arm out and seize him by the collar.

But my good master, who knew more than a trick or two, doubled sharply, and passing by his man tripped him up against a milestone where he cracked his head. This occurred whilst we were running, Monsieur d'Anquetil and I, to the assistance of Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, whom it was not seemly to desert in this pressing danger.

"L'Abbé," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "give me your hand, you are a brave man."

"In truth I think I was more or less murderous,"

said my good master. "But I am not unnatural enough to glory in it. It suffices me if I do not incur too much blame. These violent ways are scarcely mine, and such as you see me, Monsieur, I am better fitted to teach the liberal arts from a college chair than to fight with lackeys on the roadside."

"Oh!" continued Monsieur d'Anquetil, "that is not the worst part of the business. But I think you have nearly killed a Farmer-general."

"Is that really so?" asked Monsieur l'Abbé.

"As true as I stuck my sword through the tripes of some of this dirty crew."

"At this juncture," said the Abbé, "it is first necessary to ask forgiveness of God, towards Whom alone we are answerable for spilt blood; secondly, to hasten our steps to the nearest fountain, so as to wash ourselves. For I think I am bleeding from the nose."

"You are right, l'Abbé," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "for the fool who lies cut open in the gutter has broken my head. What impertinence!"

"Forgive him," said the Abbé, "so that you may be forgiven for what you have done unto him."

We found at the right moment in the wall of a hospital where the Rue du Bac loses itself in the fields, a little bronze Triton throwing a spray of water into a stone basin. We stopped to wash ourselves and drink, for our throats were dry.

"What have we done?" said my good master, "and how comes it I have been so unlike my real pacific self? It is indeed true one must not judge men from their actions, which depend on circumstances, but rather as God our Father does, by their secret thoughts and inward intentions."

"And Catherine," I asked—"what has become of her in this terrible adventure?"

"I left her," replied Monsieur d'Anquetil, "blowing into her financier's mouth to put life into him. But she might spare her pains. I know la Guéritaude. He is pitiless. He will send her to the reformatory and perchance to America. I am sorry for her. She was a pretty girl. I did not love her. But she was mad about me. And extraordinary to relate, here I am without a mistress."

"Do not be troubled," said my good master, "you will find another no different from that one, or at least not essentially different. And it seems to me that what you look for in a woman is common to all."

"It is quite clear that we are in danger," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "I—of being put in the Bastille, and you, l'Abbé, of being hung with your pupil, Tournebroche, who nevertheless has killed no one."

"It is only too true," replied my good master, "we must think of our safety. It may be necessary to quit Paris where they will not fail to look for us, and even to fly to Holland. Alas! I foresee that I shall write scurrilous papers for women of the theatre, with this very hand which illustrated with such ample notes the alchemistic treatise of Zozimus the Panopolitan."

"Listen to me, l'Abbé," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "I have a friend who will hide us on his estate as long as may be necessary. He lives four leagues from Lyons, in a wild and horrid part of the country where there is nothing to be seen but poplars, grass and woods. That's where we must go, and wait till the storm has past over. We will turn

our attention to the chase. But we must find a post-chaise as quickly as possible or, better still, a berline."

"I know the very thing, Monsieur," said the Abbé. "The *Hôtel du Cheval Rouge,* at the cross roads of Bergères will supply you with good horses and every kind of carriage. I knew the landlord in the days when I was secretary to Madame de St. Ernest. He was willing to oblige people of quality; I believe he is dead since, but he ought to have a son who takes after him. Have you any money?"

"I have a fairly large sum on me," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "and very glad I am of it, for I cannot think of going back to my house, where the police will not fail to search for me to take me to the Châtelet.* I have forgotten my men left in Catherine's house—God knows what has become of them; but I care little. I beat them and I never paid them, and yet I am not sure of their fidelity; on whom can one rely? Let us go to the cross roads of Bergères at once."

"Monsieur" said the Abbé, "I am going to make you a proposition, hoping that it may prove agreeable to you. Tournebroche and I are living in an alchemist's workshop, in a tumble-down old *château* at the Cross of Les Sablons, where you can easily spend twelve hours without being seen. We will take you with us there, and we will wait until our carriage be ready. There is much advantage that Les Sablons is not far from the cross roads of Bergères."

Monsieur d'Anquetil did not gainsay these arrangements, and we decided—standing before the

* *Châtelet.* Fortress in old Paris. Seat of criminal jurisdiction.

little Triton blowing water from his full cheeks—to go first to the Cross of Les Sablons and then to take a berline at the *Hôtel du Cheval Rouge* to drive us to Lyons.

"I will confide to you, Monsieur," said my good master, "that of the three bottles I took care to carry off with me one was unluckily broken on the head of Monsieur de la Guéritaude, the second broke in my pocket during my flight. They are both much to be regretted. The third was preserved intact against all hope—and here it is!"

And drawing it from under his coat he placed it on the edge of the fountain.

"That is one good thing," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "you have wine, I have dice and cards in my pocket. We can play."

"It is indeed excellent entertainment," said my good master. "A game of cards, Monsieur, is a book of adventures of the kind we call romance, and it has this superiority over other books of its kind that one composes it even while one reads it, and one need not have wit to compose it, nor know one's letters to read it. And it is furthermore a marvellous work, in that it makes sense and has a new meaning each time that one turns over the leaves. It is of such cunning design one cannot admire it sufficiently, for from mathematical laws it draws thousands and thousands of curious combinations and so many singular juxtapositions that people have been led to think, contrary to truth, that they could discover therein secrets of the heart, the mystery of fate, and the hidden things of the future. What I say is particularly applicable to the *tarot* of the Bohemians, which is the best of card games, but

also may apply to the game of piquet. The invention of cards may be referred to the ancients, and for my part, although truth to tell, I know no text which positively supports me here, I believe them to be of Chaldean origin. But in its present form the game of piquet does not go further back than the time of Charles VII, and, if it is true, as is said in a learned dissertation which I remember to have read at Séez, that the Queen of Hearts represents in an emblematical manner the beautiful Agnes Sorel, and that the Queen of Spades is no other than Jeanne Dulys, also called Jeanne Darc, who by her bravery re-established the affairs of the monarchy, and was then boiled at Rouen by the English, in a cauldron they show one for two *liards*, and which I have seen in passing through that town. Certain historians pretend that this maiden was burnt alive at the stake. One reads in Nicole Gilles * and in Pasquier,† that Saint Catherine and Saint Marguerite appeared to her. But certainly it was not God who sent them, for there is no one, however little learned or pious, but knows that Marguerite and Catherine were invented by the Byzantine monks whose extravagant and barbarous imaginings have defiled the Martyrology. There is a ridiculous impiety in pretending that God made saints, who never existed, appear to Jeanne Dulys, but the old chroniclers were not afraid of giving us to understand this. Why did they not say that God sent to this maiden Yseulte the fair, Melusina, Bertha Big-Foot and all the heroines of the ro-

* *Gilles,* Nicole. French chronicler, d. 1503.

† *Pasquier,* Etienne. Author of "Recherches de la France," an inquiry into the origins of French history, 1529–1615.

mances of chivalry whose existence is no more fabulous than that of the Virgin Catherine and the Virgin Marguerite?

"Monsieur de Valois in the last century rightly set himself against these gross fables, which are as much opposed to religion as error is contrary to truth. It is to be wished that some religious, instructed in history, should make the distinction between the real saints, whom it is fitting to venerate, and saints such as Marguerite, Luce or Lucie, and Eustace who are imaginary, and even St. George, of whom I have my doubts.

"If ever some day I may retire to a fair abbey provided with a rich library, I will consecrate to this task the remainder of a life nearly worn out by tempest and shipwreck. I long for port and desire to taste the sweets of repose befitting my age and condition."

While Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard was making these memorable remarks, Monsieur d'Anquetil, without hearing him, seated on the edge of the basin—shuffled the cards and swore like a fiend, because one could not see to play a game of piquet.

"You are right Monsieur," said my good master, "one cannot see very well, and I feel some annoyance, less by thought of the cards which I can very easily do without, than for the wish I have to read some pages of the Consolations of Boethius, a copy of which in a small edition I always carry in my coat-pocket, that I may have it under my hand and open it directly I fall into misfortune, as happens to me to-day. For it is a cruel mischance, Monsieur, for a man of my kind to be a homicide and menaced with the ecclesiastical prisons. I feel

that one single page of this admirable book would keep up my heart, which sinks at the very notion of the police."

Pronouncing these words he let himself sink over the inner side of the basin, and that so deeply, that he dipped the greater part of his person in the water—but he was not concerned, and seemed not even to perceive it, and drawing from his pocket his Boethius which was really there and donning his spectacles which had but one glass left and that broken in three places, he set himself to look in the little book for the page most appropriate to his situation. He would have found it no doubt, and would have drawn fresh strength from it if the ill-condition of his spectacles, the tears that rose to his eyes and the feeble light that fell from the sky had allowed the search. But he had soon to confess that he saw nothing and he fell out with the moon who showed her sharp horn from the edge of a cloud. He addressed her with vivacity and overwhelmed her with invective.

"Thou obscene Star, mischievous and libidinous!" said he. "Thou never weariest of holding the candle to the wicked ways of men, and thou grudgest a ray of light to him who seeks a virtuous maxim!"

"Well, well, l'Abbé," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "since this trollop of a moon gives us enough light to guide us through the street and not enough to play piquet, let us go straight to the *château* you spoke of and where I must enter without being seen."

The advice was good, and having drained the bottle by the neck we all three took the road to the

Cross of Les Sablons, Monsieur d'Anquetil and I walked on ahead, my good master, hindered by all the water his breeches had absorbed, followed us weeping, groaning, and dripping.

XVII

UR eyes were smarting in the early dawn when we reached the green door opening into the park of Les Sablons. We were under no necessity of knocking. For some time past the master of the house had given us the keys of his domain. We had planned that my good master should go forward cautiously with d'Anquetil in the shadow of the alley, and that I should remain behind a little to look out if necessary for the faithful Criton, and for any of the kitchen varlets who might catch sight of the intruder. This arrangement, which was only reasonable, was to cost me much anxiety. For at the moment when my two companions had already climbed the stairs, and gained without being seen my own room, where we had decided to hide Monsieur d'Anquetil till the time for our flight in the post-chaise, I had scarcely reached the second floor, and there I came upon Monsieur d'Astarac himself, clad in a robe of red damask, and bearing a silver torch. He put his hand on my shoulder as his habit was, and said to me:

"Well, my son, are you not well content to have broken off all dealings with women, and so escaped all the dangers of bad company? You have no need to fear from these daughters of the air those quarrels and fights and violent and harmful scenes which commonly break out among creatures who lead an evil life. In your solitude, which the fairies make

charming to you, you enjoy a delicious tranquillity."

At first I thought he spoke mockingly. But I soon recognised that he had no such intention.

"Our meeting is very opportune, my son, and I should be much obliged to you if you would come to my workshop for a few moments."

I followed him. With a key at least an ell in length, he opened the door of that cursed room whence I had formerly seen the infernal flames dart forth. And when we had both entered the laboratory he asked me to make up the fire, which was dying out. I threw some logs of wood in the furnace, where something was cooking which gave forth a suffocating smell. While he shifted crucibles and retorts and compounded his unholy messes, I sat back on the bench where I had sunk down, and in spite of myself closed my eyes. He forced me to open them again to admire a vessel of green pottery capped with a glass top, which he held in his hand.

"My son," said he, "you must know that this sublimatory apparatus is called an aludel. It holds a liquid which you must carefully observe, for I am about to reveal to you that this liquid is no other than the mercury of the philosophers. Do not think it is always of so dark a hue. Before long it will become white, and in that state it transforms metals into silver. Then, owing to my skill and cunning, it will turn red, and acquire the virtue of transmuting silver into gold. It would be greatly to your profit, doubtless, if, shut up in this laboratory, you did not leave it before these sublime operations were little by little accomplished, which cannot take more than two or three months. But perchance, that would be putting too great a strain

on your youth, so content yourself this time in watching the preliminaries of the work, heaping plenty of wood in the furnace meanwhile, if you please."

Having spoken thus, he disappeared once more among his bottles and retorts. Meanwhile I meditated on the unlucky position my ill-luck and imprudence had brought me to.

Alas! I said to myself, throwing logs on the fire, at this very moment the police are seeking us, my good master and me, and we shall have perhaps to go to prison—we certainly shall have to leave this *château* where I had, though lacking money, board and a certain position. I shall never dare to appear again before Monsieur d'Astarac, who believes that I spent the night in the noiseless delights of magic, and it were indeed better I had done so. Alas! never again shall I see Mosaïde's niece, she who in my little room so agreeably interrupted my slumbers. And no doubt she will forget me. Perhaps she will love another on whom she will bestow the same caresses as on me. The very thought of such infidelity, is intolerable to me. But seeing how the world wags, one must expect anything and everything.

"My son," said Monsieur d'Astarac, "you do not feed the athanor sufficiently. I perceive that you are not imbued enough with the true love of fire, whose qualities are capable of ripening this mercury and thus forming the marvellous fruit I shall soon be allowed to pluck. More wood! Fire, my son, is the superior element; I have often told you so, and I will give you an example. On a very cold day last winter I went to call on Mosaïde in his cottage. I found him seated with his feet on

a foot-warmer, and noticed that the subtle and essential particles of the fire that escaped from the stove were powerful enough to swell and puff out the learned man's gathered robe; whence I concluded that had the fire been fiercer Mosaïde would, without any doubt about it, have been raised up into the air, as he is verily worthy of such up-raising, and that were it possible to enclose in some vessel a large enough quantity of these particles of fire we might thus navigate the clouds as easily as we do to-day the sea and visit the Salamanders in their ethereal abode. I shall think over that in the time to come at leisure. And I do not despair of being able to build one of those fiery vessels myself. But let us return to our work, and put some wood in the stove."

He kept me for a considerable time longer in this glowing chamber, whence I thought to escape as quickly as I could to rejoin Jael, to whom I was anxious to impart my woes. At length he left the workshop and I thought I was at liberty. But he disappointed my hopes once again.

"The weather," said he, "is quite mild to-day, although somewhat cloudy. Would it not be pleasant to take a walk in the park with me before continuing your work on Zozimus the Panopolitan, which will do much honour to you and your good master if you finish as well as you have begun."

Regretfully I followed him to the park, when he addressed me as follows:

"I am not sorry, my son, to find myself alone with you to warn you, while there is yet time, against a great danger which may one day threaten you, and I reproach myself for not having thought

of warning you sooner, for what I have to tell you is of extreme importance."

Speaking thus he led me to the main alley which descends to the marshes of the Seine, whence one sees Rueil and Mount Valerian with its Calvary. It was his daily walk. The path was practicable, notwithstanding several tree trunks lying across it.

"It is necessary to make you understand," he pursued, "to what you may be exposed in betraying your Salamander. I shall not question you on your dealings with this supernatural person whom I was fortunate enough to introduce to you. As far as I can judge you seem yourself to feel a certain repugnance in discussing her. And perhaps it is praiseworthy on your part. If Salamanders have not the same ideas as have women of the court and of the town on the discretion of their lovers, it is none the less true that it is of the essence of the beauty of love to be inexpressible—and that to spread abroad a deep-seated feeling is to profane it.

"But your Salamander (whose name I could easily discover were I indiscreetly curious) has perhaps not spoken to you of one of her strongest passions—which is jealousy. This characteristic is common to all her kind. Bear well in mind, my son—Salamanders do not allow themselves to be betrayed with impunity. They wreak a terrible vengeance on the perjured. The divine Paracelsus relates an example which will doubtless suffice to inspire you with a wholesome dread. Therefore I will make it known to you. In a town in Germany called Staufen there was a spagyric philosopher who, like you, had dealings with a Salamander. He was

depraved enough to betray her ignominiously with a woman, pretty it is true, but not impossibly beautiful. One evening as he was supping with his new mistress and some friends, the guests saw a glistening limb of marvellous form above their heads. The Salamander showed it in order that they might be sensible that she did not merit the wrong done her by her lover. Whereafter the outraged daughter of the skies struck the faithless one with apoplexy. The vulgar, which is born to be deceived, thought it a natural death, but the initiated knew by what hand the blow came. My son, it was my duty to give you this advice and this example."

They were less useful to me than Monsieur d'Astarac thought. While listening to them I cherished other matter for alarm. My face doubtless betrayed my anxiety, for the great cabalist having turned his gaze on me asked me whether I did not fear that a pledge undertaken under such severe penalties would prove trying to my youth.

"I can reassure you on that point," he added. "The Salamander's jealousy is only roused if one puts them on a rival footing with women, and truth to tell it is more resentment, indignation and disgust than real jealousy. Salamanders have too fine a soul and too subtle an intelligence to be envious one of another and to suffer a feeling which harks back to the barbarity in which mankind is still half immersed. On the contrary, they make a pleasure of sharing with their companions the delights they enjoy in the company of a sage, and amuse themselves by bringing the prettiest of their sisters to their lovers. You will soon experience that they actually push amiability to the point I have described, and not a year nor even six months will pass before your

rooms will be a meeting-place for five or six daughters of the light vying with one another who shall loose before you their dazzling girdles. Do not fear to respond to their caresses, my son. Your friend will take no umbrage, and how should she take offence since she is so wise? In your turn, do not be vexed should your Salamander leave you for a time to visit another philosopher. Look upon this over-weening jealousy which men bring to the union of sexes as a savage feeling founded on the most absurd illusion. It rests on the idea that a woman is yours when she has given herself to you, which is simply a play upon words."

While thus holding forth to me, Monsieur d'Astarac had entered on the mandragora path and we already perceived Mosaïde's cottage through the foliage, when a terrible voice rang in my ears and made my heart beat violently. It rolled out raucous sounds, accompanied by gnashing of teeth, and on drawing near one realised that the sounds were modulated and each phrase terminated in a sort of feeble recitative, which one could not hear without shuddering.

After taking a few steps forward we could, by straining our ears, grasp the meaning of these strange words. The voice said:

"Listen to the malediction of Elisha and his curse on the joyful and insolent children. Hark to the anathema which Barak launched at Meroz.

"I condemn thee in the name of Archithariel, also called the lord of battles who holds the shining sword. I devote thee to perdition in the name of Sardaliphon who presents his master with the acceptable flowers and the garlands of merit offered by the children of Israel.

"Be accursed O dog!—and anathema, O swine!"

On looking whence the voice came we saw Mosaïde standing at his doorway—his arms raised, his hands like claws with their curved nails which the sunlight appeared to redden. Crowned with his dirty headdress, wrapped in his gaudy robe which opening allowed his thin, bowed legs to appear in their ragged breeches, he looked like some mendicant soothsayer, eternal and aged.

His eyes gleamed. He said:

"Be thou accursed in the name of the Globes—Be thou accursed in the name of the Wheels—Be thou accursed in the name of the mysterious Beasts which Ezekiel saw," and he stretched out his long clawed-like arms before him, repeating:

"In the name of the Globes, in the name of the Wheels, in the name of the mysterious Beasts—Go thou down among those who are no more."

We went a few steps into the wood to see the object to which Mosaïde extended his arms, and his wrath, and my surprise was great at discovering Monsieur Jérôme Coignard hanging on a thorn tree by his coat. The night's disorder showed all over his person, his cape and hands all torn, his stockings stained with mud, his shirt half open, all were pitiable reminders of our common mis-adventures, and, worst of all, his swollen nose, now spoilt that fine and smiling expression which never left his face.

I rushed towards him and drew him so successfully out of the thorn-bush that he left there but a fragment of his breeches. And Mosaïde having nothing left to curse went back into his house. As he only wore slippers I was enabled to see that his leg was in the middle of his foot so to speak, so

that the heel was nearly half as far out behind as the instep in front. This formation rendered his walk extremely ungraceful, which would otherwise have been rather noble.

"Jacques Tournebroche, my son," said my good master with a sigh, "that Jew must be Isaac Laquedem * himself to swear thus in all languages. He consigned me to a violent and early death with an abundance of imagery, and he called me a pig in fourteen different idioms, if I counted aright. I should take him to be Anti-Christ, did he not lack several of the signs by which that enemy of the Almighty is to be recognised. In any case he is a wicked Jew, and never has the wheel been applied in sign of infamy on the garb of a wilder miscreant. As for him, he deserves not only the wheel which they formerly fastened to the Jews' cloaks, but that wheel to which they fasten evil-doers."

And my good master, irritated beyond all measure, in his turn shook his fist at Mosaïde's back, accusing him of crucifying children and devouring the flesh of new-born infants.

Monsieur d'Astarac came up to him and touched him on the chest with the ruby he wore on his finger.

"It is useful," said the great cabalist, "to know the property of precious stones. The ruby appeases resentment and you will soon see Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard return to his usual gentleness."

My good master was already smiling, more from the effect of a philosophy which raised this admirable man above all human passions, than from the virtue of the stone. For I must own even at the time when my recital darkens and becomes sad-

* *Laquedem*, Isaac. The wandering Jew, Dutch name for.

dened, Monsieur Jérôme Coignard showed me an example of wisdom in circumstances where it is rarest of all to meet with it.

We asked him the reason of the quarrel. But I understood by the vagueness of his embarrassed replies that he had no wish to satisfy our curiosity. I had suspected from the first that Jael was mixed up in it in some manner, my indication being that we heard mingled with the grinding voice of Mosaïde the grinding of locks and the outburst of a quarrel in the cottage between the uncle and niece. Having done my very best again to extract some enlightenment from my good master, he said:

"Hatred of Christians is deep-rooted in the heart of the Jews, and this Mosaïde is an odious example of it. I thought I could discern in his horrid mouthings, some portion of the imprecation vomited last century by the synagogue on a little Dutch Jew called Baruch or Benedict, known later under the name of Spinoza, for having formulated a philosophy which was utterly refuted almost at its birth by able theologians. But this old Mordecai added to them, it seemed to me, many imprecations more horrible still, and I confess that they touched me a little. I was just meditating escape by flight from this torrent of abuse when, to my misfortune, I was caught up in these thorns, and so well seized in different parts of my clothes and my skin, that I thought I should have left both one and the other there; and I should be there still in the liveliest pain had not Tournebroche, my pupil, delivered me."

"Thorns are nothing," said Monsieur d'Astarac. "But I fear, Monsieur l'Abbé, that you may have stepped on a mandragora."

"That is the least of my anxieties," said the Abbé.

"You are wrong," said Monsieur d'Astarac with vivacity. "It is enough to put your foot on a mandragora to be tangled in some criminal love and perish miserably therein."

"Ah, Monsieur!" said my good master, "these are perils indeed, and I see that it is necessary to live close confined within the eloquent walls of the Astaracian, that queen of libraries. I quitted it for a moment and received at my head the Beasts of Ezekiel, without counting the rest."

"Have you nothing to tell me of Zozimus the Panopolitan?" asked Monsieur d'Astarac.

"He goes on his way," replied my good master, "he goes on his way, although a little languidly for the moment."

"Bethink yourself, Monsieur l'Abbé," said the cabalist, "that the possession of the greatest secrets is bound up in the knowledge of these ancient texts."

"I bethink myself of it with the greatest solicitude," said the Abbé.

And Monsieur d'Astarac, on receiving this assurance, strode off under the trees at the call of the Salamanders, leaving us by the Faun who fingered his flute, careless of his head fallen in the grass beneath him.

My good master took me by the arm in the manner of one who can at length talk openly:

"Jacques Tournebroche, my son," said he, "I must not conceal from you that a somewhat strange meeting took place this morning under the house-roof, while you were detained on the first

floor by that mad fire-blower. For I overheard him perfectly asking you to help him with his cooking, which is far less odorous and Christian than that of Maître Léonard, your father. Alas! when shall I see again the cook-shop of the *Reine Pédauque*, and Monsieur Blaizot's book-shop, at the sign of St. Catherine, where I took such pleasure in turning over the new books from Amsterdam and The Hague!"

"Alas!" I exclaimed—with tears in my eyes, "when shall I myself see them again? When shall I see once more the Rue St. Jacques where I was born, and my dear parents to whom the news of our misfortunes will cause the most acute grief? But deign to explain, my good master, this somewhat strange meeting which you say took place this morning and also the occurrences of to-day."

Monsieur Jérôme Coignard consented to enlighten me as I wished. Which he did as follows:

"You must know, my son, that without hindrance I reached the top floor of the château along with this Monsieur d'Anquetil, whom I like well enough, though he is somewhat ill-mannered and illiterate. His mind is not acquainted with what is finest, nor curious beyond its depth. The vivacity of youth sparkles agreeably in him and the generosity of his blood expends itself in amusing sallies. He knows the world as he knows women, from his upper station and without philosophy. It is mere ingenuousness on his part to call himself an atheist. His impiety carries no malice and you will see it will vanish of itself when the heat of his feelings subsides. God has no other enemies in this soul but horses, cards and women. In the soul of a true libertine such as Monsieur Bayle, for instance, truth

meets with more redoubtable and cunning adversaries. But I see, my son, that I am drawing you a portrait and a character when what you want of me is but a plain recital.

"I will satisfy your wish. Having then reached the top floor of the *château* along with Monsieur d'Anquetil, I showed the young gentleman into your room, and I begged him, in accordance with our promise to him before the fountain, to make use of the room as if it were his own. He did so without more ado, undressed, and merely retaining his boots, got into your bed, whose curtains he closed so as not to be troubled with the piercing light of early dawn, and was not long in falling asleep.

"As for me, my son, having reached my own room, although overcome with fatigue, I did not wish to taste repose before seeking in Boethius a passage suitable to my position. I found none quite fitting, and in truth the great Boethius had no need to meditate on the disgrace of having broken a Farmer-general's head with a bottle from his own cellar. But I gathered from his admirable treatise some maxims here and there which permitted of application to the present juncture.

"Whereupon, drawing my night-cap over my eyes, and recommending my soul to God, I fell asleep quite peacefully. After a period which seemed to me short, without my having had the means to measure it—for our actions are the sole measure of time, my son, which is, so to speak, suspended for us during sleep, I felt myself being pulled by the arm and heard a voice crying in my ear: 'Eh! l'Abbé, eh! l'Abbé, wake up then!' I thought it was a police officer come to arrest me

and take me before the magistrate, and I deliberated within myself if 'twere not better to break his head with my candlestick. It is unhappily but too true, my son, that once having left the straight path of gentleness and equity, where the sage walks with firm and prudent steps, one sees oneself forced to meet violence with violence, and cruelty with cruelty, in such wise that the consequence of a first transgression is to produce others. We must bear this in mind if we are to understand the life of the Roman Emperors, which Monsieur Crévier * has set down with exactitude. These princes were born no worse than other men, Caius, surnamed Caligula, lacked neither natural talent nor judgment, and was even capable of friendship. Nero had an innate love of virtue, and his temperament inclined him towards all that is just and sublime. A first transgression flung them, both one and the other, on the criminal path they followed to their wretched end. That is what Monsieur Crévier shows us in his book. I knew him as an able man when he taught literature at the College of Beauvais, as I should be doing to-day had not my life been crossed by a thousand obstacles and had not the natural easiness of my spirit led me to divers snares wherein I fell. Monsieur Crévier, my son, was a man of pure life, he professed a severe morality, and I once heard him say that a woman who has broken her marriage vows is capable of the greatest crimes, such as murder and arson. I quote this maxim to give you an idea of the holy austerity of this priest. But I see I am wandering from the point and I hasten to take up my story where I left off. I thought then that the hand of

* *Crévier,* Jean-Baptiste. Historian, b. Paris, 1693-1765.

the police was on me, and I already saw myself in the Archbishop's prison, when I recognised the face and voice of Monsieur d'Anquetil. 'L'Abbé,' said the young gentleman, 'a singular thing has happened to me in Tournebroche's room. A woman entered the room while I was asleep, slipped into my bed and awoke me with a rain of caresses, tender names, soft murmurings and ardent kisses. I opened the curtains to distinguish the features of my good fortune. I saw she was dark, of a passionate eye, and the most beautiful creature in the world. But she then and there gave a loud cry, and fled away in vexation, not so quickly though but that I was enabled to rejoin her in the corridor and hold her in a close embrace. She began by defending herself and scratching my face; when I was scratched enough for the satisfaction of her honour we commenced explanations. She heard with pleasure that I was a gentleman and none so poor. I soon ceased to appear odious to her and she had begun to wish me well when a scullion passing along the corridor caused her to fly without returning.

" 'As far as I can see,' added Monsieur d'Anquetil, 'this adorable creature came, not for me but for another; she mistook the door, and her surprise was the reason of her flight. But I re-assured her well and had it not been for the scullion I should have won her heart.' I confirmed him in this supposition. We considered for whom this pretty person could well have come, and we both were of accord that it must have been, as I have already told you, Tournebroche, for that old madman of a d'Astarac, who visits her in intimacy in a room near to yours, or, maybe unknown to you, in your own. Do you not think so?"

"Nothing is more likely," I replied.

"There is no need to doubt it," said my good master. "This magician mocks us with his Salamanders. And the truth is that he embraces that pretty girl. He is an imposter."

I begged my good master to continue his recital. He did so with a good grace.

"I abridge the discourse held with me by Monsieur d'Anquetil," said he. "It is the sign of a low and vulgar mind to enlarge on small events. On the contrary, we ought to put them into few words, tending to conciseness and keeping for moral instruction and exhortation the abundant rush of words which it is then fitting to pour down like the snow from the mountains. So I shall have instructed you enough in Monsieur d'Anquetil's remarks when I tell you that he assured me he had found in this young girl, a beauty, a charm, and an extraordinary grace. He ended his speech by asking me if I knew her name and who she was. 'From the picture you have given me,' I replied, 'I recognise her as Jael, niece of the rabbi Mosaïde, whom I happened to embrace on the same staircase—with this difference that it was between the second and third floor.'

" 'I hope,' said Monsieur d'Anquetil, 'that there were other differences for I, for my part, held her close to me. I am also grieved to hear you say she is a Jewess. For without believing in God, a certain sentiment within me would prefer her to be a Christian. But what does one know of her? Who knows but what she may be a stolen child. Jews and Bohemians go off with some every day. And then one so often fails to remember that the blessed

Virgin was a Jewess. Jewess or no, she pleases me. I want her and I will have her.' Thus spoke the foolish youth. But my son, permit me to take a seat on this moss-grown bank, for last night's work, my combats and my flight, have weakened my legs."

He sat down and drawing his empty snuff-box from his pocket looked at it sadly.

I sat down by him in a state of agitation and depression. His narrative caused me acute pain. I cursed the fate which had put a rough fellow in my place at the very moment when my beloved mistress came to seek me with all the appearance of ardent love, not knowing that I meanwhile was busied piling logs on the alchemist's stove. Jael's more than probable faithfulness cut me to the heart, and I could have wished that my good master had at least observed more discretion before my rival. I risked reproaching him respectfully for having given up Jael's name.

"Monsieur," I said, "do you not think there was a certain imprudence in furnishing such information to so pleasure-loving and headstrong a gentleman?"

My good master appeared not to hear me.

"My snuff-box," said he, "unhappily burst open during the scuffle last night, and the snuff contained therein, mixed with wine in my pocket, is now no more than a disgusting mess. I dare not ask Criton to powder me a few leaves, the countenance of that old Rhadamanthus and serving man appears so cold and severe. I suffer all the more at not being able to take snuff since my nose tickles violently as a result of the blow I received last night, and you see me quite worried by this untimely so-

licitation to which I have nothing to give. I must bear this small misfortune with an equal mind—whilst waiting till Monsieur d'Anquetil gives me a few grains from his box. And to return to this young gentleman, my son, he expressly said to me —'I love this girl—I would have you know, l'Abbé, that I shall take her with us in the post-chaise. If I have to stay here a week—a month—six months or more—I shall not leave without her.' I represented to him the dangers that might be incurred by the least delay. But he answered me that those dangers troubled him the less; that they were great for us but small for him.

" 'You, l'Abbé,' said he, 'are in a fair way to be hanged with Tournebroche, while, as for me I only risk being sent to the Bastille, where I shall find both cards and women, and whence my family will soon liberate me, for my father will interest some duchess or some dancer in my case, and not withstanding my mother having become pious, she will know how, on my behalf, to bring herself to the memory of two or three princes of the blood. So it is a settled thing—I leave with Jael—or not at all. You are at liberty, l'Abbé, to hire a post-chaise with Tournebroche.'

"The wretch well knew, my son, that we had not the means to do so. I tried to make him go back on his word. I was pressing, unctuous, and even exhortatory. It was pure waste, and in vain I made use of an eloquence which in the pulpit of a good parish church would have been worth both honour and money to me. Alas! my son—it is decreed that none of my actions should bear good fruit in this world, and it is for me that it is written in Ecclesiastes:

Quid habet amplius homo de universo labore suo, quo laborat sub sole?

"Far from making him more reasonable, my speech strengthened the young man in his obstinacy, and I will not conceal the fact from you, my son, that he made plain to me that he counted on me absolutely for the success of his wishes, and he pressed me to go and find Jael, so as to persuade her to agree to an elopement with the promise of a trousseau of fine linen, silver plate, jewels and a good income."

"Oh! Monsieur," I exclaimed, "this Monsieur d'Anquetil is uncommonly insolent. What do you think Jael will reply to these proposals when she hears of them?"

"My son," he replied, "she knows them by this time and I think will accede to them."

"In that case," I replied quickly, "we must warn Mosaïde."

"Mosaïde," answered my master, "is only too well warned. You heard a little time ago, in the neighbourhood of the cottage, the last outburst of his anger."

"What, Monsieur," said I deeply moved, "you warned that Jew of the dishonour about to touch his family. It was just like you. Allow me to embrace you. But then Mosaïde's wrath, to which we were witness, threatened Monsieur d'Anquetil, and not you?"

"My son," replied the Abbé, in an honest and noble manner, "a natural indulgence for human frailty, an obliging gentleness, the imprudent benevolence of a heart too easily touched, all these lead men oftentimes to ill-considered measures, and

expose them to the severity of the world's empty judgment. I will not hide from you, Tournebroche, that, yielding to the young gentleman's earnest appeals, I obligingly promised to go and find Jael for him, and to neglect nothing to make her agree to an elopement."

"Alas!" I exclaimed, "and you fulfilled that dismal promise! I cannot tell you to what extent your action wounds and afflicts me!"

"Tournebroche," answered my good master sternly, "you speak like a Pharisee. A divine, amiable as he was austere, has said: Turn your eyes upon yourself, and beware of judging the actions of others. Judging others, one works in vain; one is often mistaken, and easily falls into sin, whereas in self-examination and self-judgment the occupation is profitable. It is written: Thou shalt not fear the judgment of men! St. Paul the Apostle has said: It is a very small thing that I should be judged . . . of men's judgment.

"And if I thus lecture on the finest moral texts, it is to instruct you, Tournebroche, and to recall you to the humble and gentle modesty which suits you, and not to make myself appear innocent, weighed down and overcome as I am by the multitude of my sins. It is hard not to slip into sin, and it befits us not to fall into despair at each step we take in this world, where all participate equally in the original curse, and in the redemption effected by the blood of the Son of God. I do not want to lend colour to my faults, and I confess to you that the embassy which I undertook on behalf of Monsieur d'Anquetil proceeds from the fall of Eve, and is, so to

speak, one of the innumerable consequences of it, conflicting with the dolorous and abject opinion I hold of it at present, which is drawn from the desire and hope of my eternal salvation. For you must imagine mankind balanced between damnation and redemption, and tell yourself that I am at this moment at the right end of the see-saw, after being at the wrong end this morning. I own, then, that having taken the mandragora path which leads to Mosaïde's cottage, I hid myself behind a thorn-bush, waiting for Jael to appear at her window. She soon showed herself. I discovered myself and signed to her to come down. She came and found me behind the bush at a time when she thought to deceive the vigilance of her old guardian. There I told her in a low voice the night's adventures, of which she was still in ignorance, I made known to her the designs the impetuous young man had upon her, I represented to her that it was necessary in his interest as well as in yours and mine, Tournebroche, that she should assure our flight by her own departure. I dangled before her eyes Monsieur d'Anquetil's promises. 'If,' said I, 'you consent to follow him to-night, you shall have a good welcome, a trousseau richer than that of an opera singer, or that of an Abbess de Panthémont, and a fine service of silverplate.'

" 'He takes me for a light woman,' said she, 'he is over bold.'

" 'He loves you,' I replied. 'Do you wish to be worshipped?'

" 'I must have a silver centre-piece and a massive one. Did he speak to you of that? Go and tell him, Monsieur l'Abbé. . . .'

" 'What shall I tell him?' 'That I am an honest woman.' 'What more?'

" 'That he is very forward!' 'Is that all? Jael, think of our safety!'

" 'Tell him then, I only consent to go providing a note in proper form is signed the evening before.'

" 'He will sign it. Consider it done.'

" 'No, l'Abbé—nothing can be done until he undertakes to give me lessons with Monsieur Couperin. I want to learn music.'

"We were at this clause of our conference when, as ill-luck had it, the aged Mosaïde surprised us, and without hearing our conversation divined its drift. For he began to call me suborner and to load me with abuse. Jael ran to hide in her room, and I remained alone exposed to the fury of this deicide, in the state in which you saw me and whence you extricated me. Truth to tell the affair was so to speak concluded, the elopement agreed upon, our flight assured. The Wheels and the Beasts of Ezekiel shall not prevail against the silver centre-piece. I only fear lest that old Mordecai should enclose his niece behind triple bolts and bars."

"In truth," I replied, without being able to disguise my satisfaction, "I heard a great noise of keys and bolts at the very moment when I drew you from among the thorns. But is it really true that Jael agreed so quickly to proposals which were far from honest and must have cost you something to transmit to her. It confounds me. Tell me once more, my good master, did she not speak of me—did she not pronounce my name, sighing, or otherwise?"

"No, my son," replied Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, "she did not pronounce it, at least not percep-

tibly. Neither did I hear her murmur that of Monsieur d'Astarac her lover, which should have been more present with her than yours. But be not surprised that she should forget her alchemist. The mere possessing of a woman does not suffice to imprint upon her mind any profound or durable impression. Minds are impenetrable to one another, and this shows you the cruel emptiness of love. The wise man will say to himself: I am as nothing in the nothing that this creature is. To hope to leave a memory in the heart of a woman is to wish to stamp the imprint of a seal on the face of running water. Let us then beware of setting our hearts upon what passes away, and lay hold on that which is undying."

"Any way," I replied, "Jael is under sound locks, and we may trust to the vigilance of her guardian."

"My son," continued my good master, "this very night she should join us at the *Cheval Rouge*. Darkness is propitious to escapes, ravishments, furtive attempts, and clandestine actions. We must rely on the cunning of this girl. As to yourself, take care that you are at the cross roads of Bergères at twilight. You know that Monsieur d'Anquetil is not patient and that he is just the man to go off without you."

As he gave me this advice the bell rang for breakfast.

"Have you not a needle and thread?" he asked me, "my clothes are torn in several places, and before I appear at table I should like to restore them, with a few stitches, to their former decency. My breeches particularly disquiet me. They are so injured that unless I come to their assistance promptly it will be all over with them."

XVIII

O I took my usual place at the cabalist's table with the distressing thought that it was for the last time. Jael's black treachery weighed on my heart. "Alas!" I said to myself, "my dearest wish was to fly with her. There was no likelihood of its being realised. Nevertheless it is to be and in the most cruel fashion." And I fell to admiring once again my good master's wisdom, who, one day I wanted too keenly that something should succeed, answered me with these words from the Bible: *"Et tribuit eis petitionem eorum."* My sorrows and my anxieties took away all my appetite and I hardly put the various viands to my lips. However, my good master kept his unalterable suavity of mind. He overflowed with agreeable conversation and one would have said that he was one of those sages shown to us in *Télémaque* conversing in the shades of the Elysian fields, rather than a man sought for as a murderer and reduced to a wretched and wandering life.

Monsieur d'Astarac, thinking I had passed the night at the cook-shop, asked me kindly for news of my good parents, and as he could not abstract himself for a moment from his visions he added: "When I speak of that cook as your father it is to be understood that I express myself thus according to the world and not according to nature. For there is nothing to prove, my son, that you were

not fathered by a Sylph. It is indeed what I should prefer to believe, however little your still youthful talent may grow in strength and beauty."

"Oh—do not speak thus, Monsieur," replied my good master with a smile, "you will force him to hide his wits that he may not injure his mother's good name. But if you knew her better, you would think, as I do, that she has never had any dealings with a Sylph; she is a good Christian who has known no man but her husband, and who bears her good character written on her face, very different from that other cook's wife, Madame Quonian, of whom there was much talk in Paris and the provinces in the days of my youth. Did you never hear of her, Monsieur? She had the Sieur Mariette for a lover, he who later became secretary to Monsieur d'Angervilliers. He was a burly man, who, each time that he saw his lady-love, left her some bauble as a remembrance—one day a Croix de Lorraine, another day a St. Esprit, a watch or a châtelaine. Or, yet again, a handkerchief, a fan, or a casket; he stripped the jewelers' and drapers' shops at the fair of St. Germain for her, till at last the cook, seeing his wife decked like a shrine, had a suspicion that it was not all honestly come by. He watched her and it was not long before he surprised her with her lover. You must understand that the husband was a mere jealous wretch. He was angry, and gained nothing thereby—quite the contrary. For the two lovers, annoyed by his outcry, swore to be rid of him.

"The Sieur Mariette had a long arm. He obtained a *lettre de cachet* in the name of the wretched Quonian. Meanwhile, the treacherous wife said to her husband:

" 'Take me to dine in the country next Sunday, I beg of you. I look forward with pleasure to this little excursion.'

"She was loving and urgent. The husband, flattered, agreed to what she asked. Sunday come, he mounted into a ramshackle carriage with her to go to Porcherons. But scarcely had they reached Roule, when a troup of police, posted there by Mariette, arrested him and took him to Bicêtre, whence he was sent out to the Mississippi where he is still. They made a song about it which ended thus:

> Wise husbands will live undistressed
> Nor open their eyes over wide.
> It is better to be as the rest,
> Than to see Mississippi's far tide.

"And that, no doubt, is the most valuable lesson to be drawn from the case of poor Quonian of the spit.

"As for the incident, itself it only wants telling by a Petronius or an Apuleius to equal the best of the Milesian fables. The moderns are inferior to the ancients in tragedy and the minor epic. But if we fail to surpass the Greeks and Latins in the telling of the story, it is not the fault of the ladies of Paris, who never tire of enriching the subject matter by many ingenious turns and pleasing inventions. You are not without knowledge of Boccaccio's collection of tales, Monsieur: I have often read them for amusement's sake and I assure you that if the Florentine lived in France to-day he would make poor Quonian's misfortune the subject of one of his most amusing stories. For my part I have only recounted it while sitting here to

make brighter by contrast the virtue of Madame Léonard Tournebroche, who is the pride of her husband's profession as Madame Quonian was the shame of it. Madame Tournebroche, I dare make the assertion, has never been wanting in the lesser virtues whose practice is recommended in marriage, which alone of the seven sacraments is contemptible."

"I do not deny it," replied Monsieur d'Astarac. "But this Madame Tournebroche would be still more estimable had she had dealings with a Sylph, after the example of Semiramis, Olympias, and the mother of the great Pope Sylvester II."

"Ah! Monsieur," said l'Abbé Coignard, "you are always talking of Sylphs and Salamanders. In good faith have you ever seen them?"

"As well as I see you," replied Monsieur d'Astarac, "and even nearer, at least as regards the Salamanders."

"Monsieur," continued my good master, "still that is not enough for us to believe in their existence, which is contrary to the teachings of the Church. For we may be led astray by illusions. Our eyes and all our senses are but messengers of error and bearers of falsehood. They deceive us far more than they instruct us. They show us but uncertain and fugitive pictures. Truth escapes them; deriving from the eternal principle, truth is invisible as it."

"Ah!" said Monsieur d'Astarac, "I did not know you were such a philosopher nor of so subtle a mind."

"Truly," said my good master, "there are days when my soul seems heavier, and more attached to the bed and the board. But last night I broke a

bottle over the head of a Revenue officer, and it has freshened my wits to an extraordinary degree. I feel capable of scattering the ghosts which haunt you and of blowing away all these vapours. For indeed, Monsieur, these Sylphs are but the exhalations of your brain."

Monsieur d'Astarac stopped him with a quiet gesture and said: "Pardon me, Monsieur l'Abbé, but do you believe in demons?"

"I can reply to that without any difficulty," said my good master, "for I believe all that is told us of demons in good books, and I reject as error and superstition all belief in spells, amulets and exorcisms. St. Augustine tells us that when Scripture exhorts us to resist the devil, it means we should resist our evil passions and our unbridled appetites. Nothing is more detestable than all these bedevilments with which monks terrorise honest women."

"I see," said Monsieur d'Astarac, "that you endeavour to think like an honest man. You hate the coarse superstitions of the monks as much as I detest them myself. But still you believe in demons, and I had no difficulty in making you avow it. Know then that they are none other than Sylphs and Salamanders. Ignorance and fear have disfigured them in the imaginations of the timid. But in reality they are beautiful and virtuous. I will not put you in the way of meeting with the Salamanders, not being sufficiently assured of the purity of your morals; but there is nothing to hinder me from inducing you to frequent the Sylphs, Monsieur l'Abbé, they who inhabit the fields of the air, and who approach men willingly in so benevolent and affectionate a spirit that it has been possible to call them the helpful Genii. Far from

pushing us towards our ruin, as theologians believe who take them to be devils, they protect and guard their earthly friends from all peril. I could give you an infinite number of examples of the help they give. But as there must be a limit I will permit myself but one story which I have from Madame la Maréchale de Grancey herself. She was of a certain age, and had been a widow for some years, when one night in bed she received a visit from a Sylph, who said to her: 'Madame, make search in the wardrobe of your late husband. In the pocket of one of his pairs of knee-breeches will be found a letter, which were its contents known, would prove the undoing of Monsieur des Roches, your good friend and mine. See that it is given to you, and take care to burn it.'

"The Maréchale promised to follow this advice, and asked the Sylph for news of the defunct Maréchal, but he disappeared without replying.

"When she awoke she called her women to her and sent them to see if there were any clothes of the Maréchal's remaining in his cupboard. They replied that there were none, and that the lackeys had sold them all to the old-clothes man. Madame de Grancey insisted that they should search and see if they could not find at least one pair of knee-breeches. Having ransacked every corner they discovered at last an old pair of black taffeta breeches which laced up in the fashion of a former time; these they brought to the Maréchale. The latter put her hand in one of the pockets and drew out a letter, which she opened and found therein more than was necessary to ensure Monsieur des Roches being sent to a state prison. She made all speed to throw this letter in the fire. Thus the gentle-

man was saved by his good friends the Sylph and the Maréchale.

"I ask you, Monsieur l'Abbé, were those the ways of a demon? But I will give you an instance which will appeal to you more, and which I feel certain will touch the heart of a learned man like yourself. You are well aware that the Academy of Dijon is rich in men of able minds. One of them, whose name is not unknown to you, who lived in the last century, was spending learned vigils on an edition of Pindar. One night when he had worked desperately on five lines whose meaning he could not unravel, the text being very corrupt, he fell asleep despairing at cock-crow. During his slumber a Sylph, who loved him, transported him in spirit to Stockholm, introduced him into the palace of Queen Christina, led him to the library, and drawing a manuscript of Pindar from one of the shelves opened it for him at the difficult passage. The five lines were there with two or three good comments which made them quite intelligible.

"In his vehement joy the learned man awoke, struck a light, and immediately set down the lines in pencil as he remembered them. Whereupon he slept profoundly. The next day, reflecting upon his nocturnal adventure, he resolved to get light on it. Monsieur Descartes was in Sweden at the time, with the Queen, to whom he was teaching his philosophy. Our Pindarist was acquainted with him; but he was on more familiar footing with the King of Sweden's ambassador in France—one Monsieur Chanut. He addressed himself to the latter to forward a letter to Monsieur Descartes, in which he begged him to tell him if there was really a manuscript of Pindar in the Queen's library at Stock-

holm containing the different reading he now indicated. Monsieur Descartes, who was extremely civil, replied to the academician of Dijon that Her Majesty did in truth possess such a manuscript, and that he himself had read therein the lines with the different reading contained in the letter."

Monsieur d'Astarac, having related this story while peeling an apple, looked at Abbé Coignard to see the success of his speech.

My good master smiled.

"Ah! Monsieur," said he, "I see that I flattered myself a moment ago with a vain hope, and we shall never make you renounce your chimeras. I grant you with a good grace that you have shown us an ingenious Sylph, and I should like to have so pleasing a secretary. His help would be particularly useful to me in one or two passages of Zozimus the Panopolitan which are extremely obscure. Could you not give me the means of invoking at need some library Sylph as handy as the one at Dijon?"

Monsieur d'Astarac replied gravely. "'Tis a secret, Monsieur l'Abbé, which I will confide to you willingly. But I warn you that if you impart it to the profane your ruin is certain."

"Have no fear," said the Abbé. "I am very anxious to know such a valuable secret, although, to speak plainly, I expect no result, not believing in your Sylphs. So instruct me if you please."

"You demand it?" said the cabalist. "Know, then, that when you wish for help from a Sylph you have but to pronounce the one word *Agla*. Immediately the sons of the air will fly towards you, but you will understand, Monsieur l'Abbé, this word must be spoken from the heart as well as with the

lips, and that in faith lies all its virtue. Without faith it is but an empty murmur. And as I have just said it, without either expression or desire, it has, even in my mouth, but feeble power, and at most some Sons of the Morning, hearing it, may train their light shadows through the room. I rather guessed at than perceived them; I saw them on that curtain, and they vanished before they took shape. Neither you nor your pupil suspected their presence. But had I pronounced the magic word with true expression you would have seen them appear in all their glory. They are of entrancing beauty. Here, Monsieur l'Abbé, you have from me a great and useful secret. Once more let me beg you not to divulge it imprudently. And do not overlook the case of the Abbé de Villars, who, for having revealed their secrets, was assassinated by the Sylphs on the Lyons road."

"On the Lyons road," said my good master. "That is strange!"

Monsieur d'Astarac left us in his sudden fashion.

"I mean to ascend once more," said the Abbé "to that august library where I tasted such austere delights and which I shall never see again. Do not fail, Tournebroche, to be at the cross roads of Bergères at night-fall."

I promised not to fail him; I had planned to shut myself in my room to write to Monsieur d'Astarac and my good parents that they must forgive my not taking leave of them, fleeing as I did after an adventure in which I had been more unfortunate than culpable.

But on the landing I heard snores issuing from my room and on opening the door I saw Monsieur d'Anquetil asleep on my bed—his sword against the

bed-post and playing-cards spread all over the coverlet. I had the desire for a moment to stab him with his own sword, but this notion was dissipated as soon as born and I let him sleep, smiling to myself in my sorrow at the thought that Jael —shut behind triple bolts—could not come and join him.

I went into my good master's room to write my letters, where I disturbed five or six rats who were nibbling the volume of Boethius on the bed-side table. I wrote to Monsieur d'Astarac and to my mother, and I composed a most affecting letter for Jael. I re-read it and wet it with my tears— "Perchance," said I to myself, "the faithless one will mingle hers with them."

Then, overcome with fatigue and melancholy, I threw myself on my good master's mattress and was not long in falling into a half-slumber troubled by dreams at once amorous and gloomy. I was drawn from my slumbers by the speechless Criton who entered the room and held out to me on a silver tray an iris-scented curl-paper where I read a few words written in pencil in an awkward hand—I was wanted outside on urgent business. The note was signed: "Brother Ange, unworthy monk."

I ran to the green door and I found the little brother in the road sitting beside the ditch in a pitiable state of prostration. Not having strength to rise at my approach, he turned on me the dog-like gaze of two big eyes, almost human, and drowned in tears. His bearded chest heaved beneath his sighs. He said to me in a tone that carried grief:

"Alas! Monsieur Jacques, the hour of trial has come to Babylon, as was spoken by the prophets.

On information given by Monsieur de la Guéritaude to the head of the police, Catherine was taken to the reformatory by the officers and will be sent to America in the next convoy. I had the news from Jeannette the viol-player, who, at the moment when Catherine arrived in the cart at the reformatory, was just leaving it herself, after having been kept there through illness of which she is now cured by the surgeon's art—at least if God wills. As regards Catherine she will be sent to the islands without mercy."

And at this point of his story brother Ange cried copiously. After trying to stop his tears with kind words, I asked him if he had nothing else to tell me.

"Alas! Monsieur Jacques," he replied, "I have told you what was the most essential, and the rest floats in my head like the Spirit of God on the waters—though I mean no comparison. It is all obscure chaos. Catherine's misfortune has destroyed all feeling in me. Nevertheless I must have had news of some importance to communicate to you, thus to risk coming to the door of this curséd house, where you live in company with all kinds of devils, and it was with terror, after reciting the prayer to St. Francis that I dared raise the knocker to give a servant the note I had written to you. I do not know if you have been able to read it, I am so little accustomed to forming letters, and the paper was not good to write upon, but it is the pride of our sacred order not to yield to the vanities of the age. Oh! Catherine in the reformatory! Catherine in America! Is it not enough to melt the hardest heart? Jeannette herself was crying her eyes out over it, although she is jeal-

ous of Catherine, who outshines her in beauty and youth as St. Francis surpasses all other saints in holiness. Ah, Monsieur Jacques! Catherine in America! such are the extraordinary ways of Providence! Alas! our holy religion says truth, and King David was right when he said that all flesh was grass, for Catherine is in the reformatory. These stones on which I sit are happier than I, although I am clad as a Christian and even as a monk. Catherine in the reformatory!"

He sobbed afresh. I waited till the torrent of his woes had abated and I asked him if he had news of my dear parents.

"Monsieur Jacques," he answered, "it is they who sent me to you charged with an urgent message. I must tell you they are not at all happy, it is the fault of Maître Léonard your father, who passes all the days God gives him in drinking and in play. And the savoury steam of chickens and geese no longer rises as once towards the *Reine Pédauque* whose picture swings dismally in the wet and rusting winds. Where are the days gone when your father's cook-shop would scent the rue St. Jacques from the *Petit Bacchus* to the *Trois Pucelles?* Since that sorcerer entered there everything wastes away, man and beast, as a result of the spell he cast on it. And divine vengeance has begun to manifest in the place ever since that fat Abbé Coignard was received whilst I, on the contrary, was turned out. It was the primary cause of the evil, which came from l'Abbé Coignard being so proud of the depth of his knowledge and of the elegance of his manners. For pride is the source of all sin. Your sainted mother did very wrong, Monsieur Jacques, not to be satisfied with the lessons I charitably gave

you, which would without doubt have made you capable of ruling the kitchen, handling the larding-pin and bearing the banner of the fraternity after the Christian death of your father, whose last service and funeral cannot be long delayed—for all life is transitory and he drinks exceedingly hard."

The news caused me a grief easy to understand. I mingled my tears with the little brother's. At the same time I asked him for news of my good mother.

"God," he made reply, "who was pleased to afflict Rachel in Ramah, has sent your mother, Monsieur Jacques, divers tribulations for the good of her soul, and for the purpose of chastising Maître Léonard for his sin, when in my person he wickedly drove Jesus Christ from the cook-shop. For He has transferred the greater part of the purchasers of poultry and pasties to Madame Quonian's daughter, who turns the spit at the other end of the rue St. Jacques. Your respected mother sees with sorrow that He has blessed that house at the expense of her own, which is so deserted now that moss all but covers the doorstep. She is upheld in her trials firstly by her devotion to St. Francis, and secondly, by thought of your success in the world where you bear a sword like a man of quality.

"But this second consolation was greatly diminished this morning, when the police came to seek you at the shop to take you to Bicêtre to pound lime for a year or two. It was Catherine who denounced you to Monsieur de la Guéritaude, but one must not blame her, she merely confessed the truth which it was her duty to do, seeing she is a Christian. She designated you and Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard as Monsieur d'Anquetil's accomplices,

and gave a faithful account of the murders and carnage of that awful night. Alas! her candour availed her nothing and she was taken to the reformatory! It is horrible to think about."

At this point in his story the little brother put his head in his hands and cried afresh.

Night had fallen. I feared to miss the *rendez-vous*. Dragging the little brother out of the ditch where he was half buried, I put him on his feet and begged him to continue his narrative accompanying me meanwhile on the St. Germain's road as far as the cross roads of Bergères. He acceded willingly, and walking sadly beside me asked me to try and unravel the tangled thread of his thoughts. I led him back to the point when the police came to take me at the cook-shop.

"Not finding you," he continued, "they wanted to take your father in your place. Maître Léonard pretended he did not know where you were hidden, your respected mother said the same thing, with many vows, may God forgive her, Monsieur, for she was evidently perjuring herself. The police began to be angry. Your father made them listen to reason by giving them drink. And they parted quite good friends. During this time your mother went and fetched me from the *Trois Pucelles,* where I was begging in accordance with the holy rules of my order. She sent me with all haste to you to warn you to fly without delay, for fear that the lieutenant of police should discover the house where you are living."

While listening to these gloomy words I hastened my steps and we had already crossed the bridge of Neuilly.

On the somewhat steep hill which mounts up to

the cross roads whose elms we could already distinguish, the little brother continued talking in an exhausted voice.

"Your worthy mother," said he "especially commanded me to warn you of the peril which threatens you and she gave me a little bag for you, which I hid under my robe. I cannot find it though," he added, after feeling himself all over. "And how can you expect me to find anything after losing Catherine? She had a great devotion for St. Francis and was very charitable. Yet they have treated her as a harlot, and will shave her head, and it is terrible to think that she will come to look like a dress-maker's dummy—and in that state she will be shipped to America, where she will risk dying of fever or being eaten by savage cannibals."

He finished his recital with a sigh as we reached the cross roads. On our left the inn, the *Cheval Rouge,* lifted above a double row of elms its slate-covered roof and dormer windows provided with pulleys, and through the trees one saw the carriage entrance wide open. I slackened my steps, and the little brother sank down under a tree.

"Brother Ange," said I, "you spoke of a packet my good mother begged you to give me."

"She did, indeed, ask me to do so," replied the little brother, "and I have put the packet away so carefully somewhere that I do not know where it can be, but please believe, Monsieur Jacques, that I can only have lost it through over-much precaution."

I answered him impetuously that he could not have lost it, and if he did not immediately find it I would help him myself to look for it.

He was not insensible to the tone of my words,

for with a heavy sigh he drew from under his robe a small calico bag which he regretfully held out to me. I found therein an *écu* of six *livres* and a medal of the Black Virgin of Chartres, which I kissed while shedding tears of emotion and repentance. Meanwhile the little brother was drawing packets of coloured pictures out of all of his pockets, and prayers decorated with coarse drawings. He picked out one or two which he offered to me in preference to the others as being more useful in his opinion, for pilgrims, and travellers, and all wandering people.

"They are blessed," he told me, "and efficacious when in danger of death or sickness, either by reciting them aloud or by touching and placing them on the skin. I give them to you, Monsieur Jacques, for the love of God. Remember to give me some alms. Do not forget that I beg in the name of St. Francis. He will take you under his protection without fail, if you assist his most unworthy son—which I certainly am."

While he spoke in this fashion, I saw in the fading light of day a berline with four horses drive out of the carriage entrance of the *Cheval Rouge* and take its place with noisy clackings of the whip and neighing of horses at the road-side, quite near to the tree under which brother Ange was seated. I noticed then that it was not exactly a berline, but a big carriage with places for four people, with a rather small coupé in front. I had been looking at it for a minute or two, when I saw Monsieur d'Anquetil climbing up the hill accompanied by Jael in a mob cap carrying some bundles under her cloak and followed by Monsieur Coignard laden with five or six ancient books wrapped in an old manuscript.

At their approach the postilions let down the steps, and my pretty mistress, drawing up her skirts like a balloon, hoisted herself into the coupé, pushed from behind by Monsieur d'Anquetil.

At this sight I ran forward crying:

"Stop, Jael! Stop, Monsieur!" But the seducer merely pushed the faithless one the harder, and her charming curves were soon lost to sight. Then, preparing to join her, one foot on the step, he looked at me in surprise:

"Ah, Monsieur Tournebroche! You would take all my mistresses from me! First Catherine and then Jael. I vow it must be a wager."

But I took no notice of him and I still called on Jael, while brother Ange, having risen from the shade of his elm-tree, went and stood by the door offering Monsieur d'Anquetil pictures of Saint Roche, a prayer to recite while horses are being shod, and the prayer against erysipelas, and asked for alms in a mournful voice.

I should have remained there all night calling on Jael if my good master had not drawn me towards him and pushed me into the body of the carriage whither he followed me.

"Leave them the coupé," he said, "and let us travel together in this roomy body. I sought you for a long time, Tournebroche, and I will not disguise the fact that we were going without you, when I perceived you and the monk under the tree. We can tarry no longer, for Monsieur de la Guéritaude is searching busily for us, and he has a long arm—he lends money to the king."

The berline was already moving, and brother Ange, hanging by the door with outstretched hand, pursued us, begging for alms.

I sank back on the cushions.

"Alas! Monsieur," I exclaimed, "you told me that Jael was imprisoned behind triple bolts."

"My son," replied my good master, "you ought not to have had such confidence in them, for young women make light of jealousy and padlocks. And if the door be shut they jump from the window. You have no idea, Tournebroche, of the cunning of women. The ancient writers have given us many admirable examples, and you will find several in the book of Apuleius, where they are like salt seasoning the narrative of the Golden Ass. But where this cunning is best to be seen is in an Arabian tale which Monsieur Galland has lately made known to Europe, and which I will relate to you:

"Schariar, Sultan of Tartary, and his brother Schahzenan, were walking one day by the sea, when they suddenly espied a black column rising above the waters and advancing towards the land. They recognised a Djinn of the fiercest kind, in the form of a giant of prodigious height bearing on his head a glass box fastened with four iron locks. This sight inspired them with such fear that they went and hid in the fork of a tree near by. Meanwhile the Djinn stepped out on the beach with the box, which he carried to the foot of the tree where the two princes were hid. Then lying down himself, he was not long in falling asleep. His legs stretched as far as the sea and his breathing shook heaven and earth. While he took his repose in this terrifying manner, the lid of the box was lifted and out stepped a lady of majestic height and perfect beauty. She raised her head . . ."

At this point I interrupted the story to which I was scarcely listening.

"Ah, Monsieur," I cried, "what do you think Jael and Monsieur d'Anquetil are saying to one another now, alone in the coupé?"

"I do not know," replied my good master, "that is their business, not ours. But let us finish this Arabian tale, which is full of meaning. You thoughtlesly interrupted me, Tournebroche, at the moment when the lady, raising her head, discovered the two princes in the tree where they were hidden. She made signs to them to come to her, and, seeing them hesitate, divided between desire to respond to the appeal of so beautiful a person and fear of approaching so terrible a giant, she said to them in a low but animated voice, 'Come down at once or I will wake the Djinn!' They understood by her imperious and resolute look that it was no mere threat and that the safest and most agreeable way was to come down. They did so, taking all possible precautions not to wake the Djinn. When they got down again, the lady took them by the hand and going a little way off with them she made them clearly understand she was ready to give herself straightway to both one and the other. They lent themselves with a good grace to this fancy, and as they were men of stout heart their fears did not spoil their pleasure. Having obtained all she wished, and noticing that each wore a ring on his finger, she asked for it. Then returning to the box wherein she dwelt she drew forth a chaplet of rings which she showed to the princes.

" 'Do you know,' she said to them, 'the meaning of these threaded rings? They are those of all the men to whom I have been as gracious as to you. There are ninety-eight all told, which I keep in remembrance of them. I asked you for yours

for the same reason and to make up the hundred. So there,' she said, 'are a hundred lovers whom I have had up to now, despite the vigilance and care of this wicked Djinn who never leaves me. Let him shut me in a glass case and keep me hidden at the bottom of the sea, I deceive him as often as I please."

"This ingenious apologue," added my good master, "shows you woman to be as cunning in the East where she is kept in seclusion as amongst the Europeans where she is free. If one of them has formed a scheme, neither husband, lover, father, uncle nor guardian can prevent its being carried out. You need not be surprised then, my son, that to betray the vigilance of that old Mordecai was but mere play for Jael who, with her perverse talent, mingles the skill of our courtesans with oriental perfidy. I suspect her to be as greedy for pleasure as she is for gold and silver, and worthy of the race of Aholah and Aholibah.

"Her beauty bites and stings the sense, and I myself feel it in some degree, though age, sublime meditation, and the wretchedness of a troubled life have much deadened the sentiment of carnal pleasure in me. Judging by the pain that the success of her adventure with Monsieur d'Anquetil causes you, my son, I conclude that you feel the piercing fang of desire far more keenly than do I, and that you are wrung with jealousy. That is why you blame an action, irregular it is true and contrary to vulgar conventions, but indifferent in itself—or at least which adds little to the universal ill. You condemn me in your heart for having had a share in it, and you think you uphold the moral view of the question when you are but following the

prompting of your passions. So do we colour our worst instincts in our own eyes, my son. The morals of mankind have no other origin. Nevertheless confess that it would have been a pity to leave such a handsome girl any longer to that old madman. Agree that Monsieur d'Anquetil, young and handsome as he is, is better suited to such a charming person, and be resigned to what you cannot prevent. Such philosophy is difficult, but it would be still more so were it your mistress who had been taken. Then you would feel teeth of iron torturing your flesh and your mind would be filled with odious and over-definite pictures. These considerations, my son, should mitigate your present suffering. For the matter of that, life is full of pains and suffering. That is what has made us conceive the hope of eternal beatitude."

Thus spoke my good master, while the elms lining the royal road fled past us on either side. I refrained from telling him that he merely irritated me in wishing to ease my woes and that unconsciously he touched an open wound.

Our first relay was at Juvisy where we arrived in the rain in the early morning. Entering the posting inn I found Jael in the chimney-corner where five or six chickens were turning on three spits. She was warming her feet and showing a little bit of silk stocking which greatly disturbed me by the thought of the leg which I pictured to myself, the fine grain of the skin, and its down and all sorts of arresting details.

Monsieur d'Anquetil leant over the back of her chair, his cheek on his hand. He was calling her his life and his soul, he asked her if she were not hungry, and when she replied that she was, he

went out to give orders. Left alone with the faithless one, I looked into her eyes, which reflected the flame of the fire.

"Ah, Jael!" I exclaimed, "I am very unhappy; you have deceived me, and you love me no longer."

"Who has told you that I love you no longer?" she replied, looking at me with a glance of velvet and of flame.

"Alas! Mademoiselle, it is sufficiently apparent in your behaviour."

"What, Jacques—do you mean to say you grudge me the outfit of fine Dutch linen and the embossed plate this gentleman is going to give me? I ask you only to be discreet until his promises are realised, and you shall see me what I was at the Cross of Les Sablons."

"Alas, Jael, meanwhile my rival will enjoy your favours."

"I feel," said she, "that he will not mean much to me, and nothing can efface the memory I have of you. Do not torment yourself about such trifles; they are only of value by your idea of them."

"Oh," I exclaimed, "the very idea is terrible to me, and I fear I shall not survive your treachery."

She looked at me in sympathetic raillery and said, smiling:

"Believe me, my friend, we shall neither of us die of it. Bethink yourself, Jacques, that I must have linen and plate. Be prudent, do not allow the feelings which trouble you to be seen, and I promise to reward you for your discretion later."

This hope somewhat softened my consuming grief. Mine hostess came and laid the lavender-scented cloth, and put the tin-plates, goblets, and jugs on the table. I was very hungry, and when

Monsieur d'Anquetil came into the inn with the Abbé and invited us to eat something, I took my place willingly between Jael and my good master. In fear of being pursued we left after hastily devouring three omelets and two small chickens. It was agreed upon that in this pressing danger we should not halt until we got to Sens, where we decided to spend the night.

I had horrible thoughts of this night, thinking it was to witness the consummation of Jael's treachery. And this only too legitimate apprehension troubled me to such an extent that I lent but a distracted attention to my good master's speech—whom the smallest incidents of the journey inspired with admirable reflections.

My fears were not vain. Alighting at Sens, at the wretched hostelry of the *Homme-Armé,* scarcely had we eaten our supper when Monsieur d'Anquetil led Jael away to his room, which happened to be next to mine, and I could not taste a moment's repose. I rose up in the dawn, and fleeing this hateful room I went and sat down mournfully in the carriage-entrance amid the post boys who were drinking white wine and ogling the maid-servants. There I remained for two or three hours meditating on my troubles. The horses were already put to, when Jael appeared under the archway, shivering under her black cloak. I could not bear to look at her. I turned away my eyes. She came up to me and sitting down by me on the door-post said gently that I was not to distress myself, that what I imagined to be so monstrous was really nothing much, that one must be guided by reason, that I was too sensible a man to want a woman to myself alone, and that in that case one took a housekeeper

with neither wit nor beauty, and even then there was great risk to be run.

"I must leave you," she added, "I hear Monsieur d'Anquetil's step on the stairs."

And she gave me a kiss on the mouth which she lingered over and prolonged in a rapture of fear, for her lover's boots were creaking on the stairs near us, and the pretty gambler was risking the loss of her Dutch linen and embossed silver centre-piece.

The postilion lowered the step of the coupé, but Monsieur d'Anquetil asked Jael if it would not be pleasanter for all to sit together in the body of the carriage, and it did not escape me that it was the first result of his intimacy with Jael, and that fulfilling of his desires had rendered solitude with her less attractive. My good master had taken care to borrow five or six bottles of white wine from the cellar of the *Homme-Armé,* which he had arranged under the cushions and which we drank to pass the time on the way.

At mid-day we arrived at Joigny, which is quite a pretty town. Foreseeing that I should come to the end of my funds before the close of our journey, and not being able to bear the thought of Monsieur d'Anquetil paying my share of the reckoning without being reduced thereto by the most extreme need, I resolved to sell a ring and a medal of my mother's that I had by me. I searched the town for a jeweller. I found one in the market-place opposite to the church, who had a shop full of chains and crosses at the sign of the *Bonne Foi.*

What was my astonishment at finding my good master there, who, standing before the counter, and drawing from a twist of paper five or six small diamonds which I easily recognised as those which

Monsieur d'Astarac had shown us, asked the jeweller what price he thought he could give for the stones!

The jeweller examined them, then looking at the Abbé over his spectacles said:

"Monsieur, these stones would be very valuable if they were real. But they are false and there is no need of the touchstone to be assured of it. They are beads of glass, only fit for children's playthings —unless one were to stick them in the crown of some village statue of Our Lady, where they would make a fine effect."

On hearing this Monsieur Coignard took up his diamonds and turned his back on the jeweller. In doing so he perceived me and seemed somewhat confused at the meeting. I finished my business in a very short time, and finding my good master in the doorway, I represented to him the wrong he did himself and his companions in making off with stones which, had they been real, might have been his undoing.

"My son," he replied, "God in His desire to keep me guiltless has willed that they should be jewels only in appearance and seeming. I confess that I did wrong to go off with them. You see that I am regetting it, and it is a page in the book of my life I should like to tear out, where several leaves, to speak plainly, are not as clean and immaculate as they should be. I feel keenly how reprehensible my behaviour has been in this particular. But man should not be over-much cast down when he falls into fault; now is the moment for me to say to myself, as did a famous divine, 'Consider your great weakness, which you put to the proof only too often on the slightest occasion, and never-

theless it is for your good that these things or others like unto them happen to you. All is not over for you if you find yourself often afflicted and sorely tempted, and that though you succumb to temptation. You are man and not God; you are human flesh and no angel. How can you always remain in the same virtuous state when this fidelity has failed the very angels in Heaven and the first man in Paradise?' Such, Jacques, my son, is the only spiritual discourse and sound self-communion which meet my present state of mind. But is it not time, after this unfortunate step over which we will not linger, to return to our inn, and there in company with the post-boys who are simple folk and easy to deal with, drink one or two bottles of the wine of the place?"

I sided with this view, and we regained the post-house where we found Monsieur d'Anquetil, who had also returned from the town bringing back some cards. He played piquet with my good master and when we were on our way again they continued playing in the carriage. This passion for play, by which my rival was carried away, afforded me some freedom with Jael, who talked more willingly with me now that she was deserted. I found a bitter pleasure in these talks. Reproaching her with her treachery and her unfaithfulness I eased my sorrow by complaints now low now loud.

"Alas, Jael," said I, "the memory and the vision of our caresses, which were once my dearest delight, have become but cruel torture to me, through the thought that to-day you are for another what you once were for me."

She made answer:

"A woman is not the same with every one."

And when I lengthily prolonged my wailings and reproaches, she said:

"I understand that I have caused you sorrow. But that is no reason why you should overwhelm me a hundred times a day with your useless complaining."

When Monsieur d'Anquetil lost, his temper became troublesome. He molested Jael at every opportunity, who, not being patient, threatened to write to her uncle Mosaïde to come and fetch her away. These quarrels at first afforded me some glimmer of hope and rejoicing, but after they had been renewed several times, I saw them arise with anxiety, having recognised the fact that they were followed by impetuous reconciliations which proclaimed themselves to my ears in sudden kisses, whisperings and lustful sighs. Monsieur d'Anquetil could scarcely endure me. But, on the other hand, he had a lively affection for my good master, who deserved it by his equable and smiling temper and the incomparable elegance of his wit. They played and drank together in a sympathy which grew with every day. With knees approached to support the table on which they threw down the cards, they laughed, joked, and teased one another, and though it sometimes happened that they threw the cards at each other's heads, exchanging abuse that would have made blush the dockmen of the Port St. Nicholas or the boatmen of the Mall, and though Monsieur d'Anquetil swore before God, the Virgin and all the saints that he had never in his life seen a worse scoundrel than Abbé Coignard even at the end of a rope, one felt that he dearly loved my good master, and it was amusing to hear him a moment after say laughingly:

"L'Abbé—you shall be my chaplain and my partner at piquet. You must also hunt with us. We must search the whole county of Perche for a horse strong enough to carry you, and you shall have a hunting-outfit such as I have seen on the bishop of Uzès. It is high time anyway that you had some new clothes, for, without complaining, Monsieur l'Abbé, your breeches really scarcely cover you at the back."

Jael also yielded to the irresistible attraction which inclined souls to my good master. She resolved to repair as well as possible the disorder of his toilet. She pulled one of her dresses to pieces and made him a present of a lace handkerchief to make some bands. My good master received these small gifts with graceful dignity. I had occasion to remark it several times: he carried himself gallantly towards women. He showed an interest in them which never became indiscreet, praised them with the insight of a connoisseur, gave them counsel gained in his long experience, and shielded them with the infinite indulgence of a heart ready to pardon all weaknesses, and yet neglected no occasion to make them listen to great and useful truths.

Reaching Montbard on the fourth day we stopped on a height whence we could perceive the whole town, lying in a small compass as if it had been painted on canvas by some clever workman careful to put in all the details.

"Look upon these walls, these towers, belfries and roofs which rise above the verdure," said my good master. "They constitute a town, and without seeking to know its name or its history, it befits us to reflect upon it as one of the most worthy subjects of meditation that can be offered us on the

face of the globe. Indeed, a town of any kind affords the mind subject for speculation. The postboys tell us this is Montbard. The place is unknown to me. Nevertheless, I do not fear to affirm by analogy that the people who dwell there, like ourselves, are egoistic, cowardly, treacherous, greedy and debauched. Otherwise they would not be men, nor descended from Adam, in whom, being at once miserable and yet worthy of veneration, all our instincts even down to the very lowest have their august source. The only point on which one might hesitate is to know whether those people down there are more disposed to the love of food than to reproduction of their kind. Yet no doubt is permissable; a philosopher will form the sane opinion that hunger, for these unfortunate beings, is a more pressing goad than love. In my salad days I thought the human animal was inclined above all things to the union of the sexes. But it was merely a snare; and it is plain that men are more interested in preserving life than in giving it. Hunger is the axis of humanity: but as it is idle to dispute the matter here I will say, if you wish, that mortal life has two poles, hunger and love. And now is the moment to lend me your ears and your hearts! These hideous creatures, who are bent on furiously devouring or embracing one another, live together under laws which straitly forbid them the satisfying of this double and deep-seated concupiscence. These ingenuous animals, having become citizens, willingly impose on themselves privations of all kinds, respect the property of others, which is a prodigious thing considering their greedy nature, and observe a modesty, a common but enormous hypocrisy, consisting in rarely

speaking of what they think of continually. For own, in all good faith, Messieurs, when we see a woman it is not the beauty of her soul and the qualities of her mind on which our thoughts fix themselves, and in talk with her it is her natural traits we have principally in view. And the charming creature knows it so well, that dressed by a clever milliner she has taken care only to veil her attractions by heightening them with various artifices. And Mademoiselle Jael, who is no savage, would be quite distressed if art in her had the upper hand over nature to such a point that one could not see the fulness of her bosom and the roundness of her form. So, in whatever way we regard men since the fall of Adam we see them hungry and incontinent. Whence comes it then that gathered together in towns they impose privations of all sorts on themselves, and submit themselves to a regimen completely opposed to their corrupt nature. It has been said that they found it to their advantage, and that they felt that this constraint was the price of their safety. But that is to suppose them unreasonable, and, what is more, using a wrong reasoning, for it is ridiculous to save one's life at the cost of what constitutes its excuse and its value. It has also been said that fear held them obedient, and it is true that imprisonment, the gallows and the wheel, all successfully insure obedience to laws. But certain it is that prejudice has gone hand in hand with the laws, and one cannot well see how constraint has been so universally established. One defies laws as the necessary relations of things, but we have just seen that these relations, far from being necessary, are in flat contradiction to nature. Hence, Messieurs, I seek the

source and origin of laws not in mankind but beyond them, and I believe that being strange to mankind they come from God, Who has shaped with His mysterious Hands not only the earth and the water, plants and animals, but even nations and societies. I believe that laws emanate straight from Him, from His first decalogue and that they are inhuman because they are divine. You quite understand that I am considering codes in their underlying principles and essence, without wishing to enter into their laughable diversity and pitiable complications. The details of custom and prescription both written and spoken, are man's part in it, and this part may be disdained. But do not let us fear to acknowledge it. The City is a divine institution. From which it results that every government should be a theocracy. A priest noted for the share he took in the Declaration of 1682, Monsieur Bossuet, was not mistaken in wanting to lay down political rules after the maxims of Holy Scripture, and if he failed miserably, one can only blame the weakness of his genius which dully clung to examples drawn from the book of Judges and Kings, failing to see that God, when He works in this world, has regard to time and space and knows how to differentiate between the French and the Israelites. The City, re-established under this, the only true and lawful authority, would not be the city of Joshua, Saul, nor David, it would more likely be the city of the *Gospel,* the city of the poor, where the workman and the prostitute will not be put to shame by the Pharisee. Oh, Messieurs, how well it would be to draw from the Scriptures a more beautiful and sacred policy than that which was painfully extracted by Monsieur Bossuet, so strict and

harsh in style. What a City, more harmonious than that which Orpheus raised to the sounds of his lyre, shall rise on the teachings of Jesus Christ, the day when His priests, no longer sold to emperors and kings, shall show themselves as the true princes of the people!"

While standing round my good master, hearing him discourse in this wise, we were surrounded without our noticing by a troop of beggars, who, limping, shivering, dribbling, waving stumps, shaking goîtres, and exposing wounds running with poisonous discharge, beset us with their importunate benedictions. They flung themselves greedily on some coins which Monsieur d'Anquetil threw to them and rolled together in the dust.

"It makes me ill to look at those unfortunate beings," sighed Jael.

"Your pity sits on you like an ornament, Mademoiselle," said Monsieur Coignard; "these sighs lend a grace to your bosom by swelling it with a breath we should each of us like to inhale from your lips. But allow me to tell you that this tenderness, which is not the less touching for being interested, moves your bowels to compassion by the comparison of these poor wretches with yourself, and by the instinctive feeling that your young body touches, so to speak, these hideously ulcerated and mutilated forms, as it is in very truth allied and attached to them in so far as we are all members of Our Lord Jesus Christ, whence it follows that you cannot face the corruption on the flesh of these wretches without seeing it at the same time as a presage to your own flesh. And these wretched beings have risen up before you like prophets proclaiming that the lot of the children of Adam in

this world is sickness and death. That is why you sighed, Mademoiselle.

"As a matter of fact there is no reason to conclude that these beggars, eaten up with ulcers and vermin, are more unhappy than kings and queens. We must not even say that they are poorer, if, as it appears, the *liard* that woman with the goître has picked up in the dust, dribbling with joy, seems to her more precious than is a collar of pearls to the mistress of a Prince-Bishop of Cologne or Salzburg. Properly, to understand our spiritual and veritable interests we ought to envy the existence of that cripple, who creeps towards you on his hands, in preference to that of the King of France or the Emperor. Their equal before God, he perchance possesses that peace of the heart which they know not, and the inestimable treasure of innocence. But draw your skirts round you, Mademoiselle, for fear of the vermin with which I see he is covered."

Thus talked my good master and we never tired of listening to him.

At about three leagues from Montbard, one of the traces having broken and the post-boys lacking the cord wherewith to mend it, as that part of the world was far from all habitation, we remained there in a distressed condition. My good master and Monsieur d'Anquetil killed the boredom of this enforced halt by playing cards with that sympathy in their quarrels now become a habit with them. While the young gentleman showed his astonishment that his partner returned the king more often than consorted with the law of probabilities, Jael drew me aside and somewhat agitatedly asked me if I did not see a carriage stopping behind us

at a winding in the road. Looking at the spot she indicated I saw indeed an antiquated *calèche* of a ridiculous and odd shape.

"That carriage," added Jael, "stopped when we did. So it must have been following us. I wish I could make out the faces of those who are travelling in that concern. I am anxious about it. Is it not covered with a tall narrow hood? It is like the carriage my uncle took me in to Paris when I was quite small, after he had killed the Portuguese. As far as I know it was left in a stable at the *château* of Sablons. This one exactely recalls it, and a horrible souvenir it is, for I last saw my uncle in it foaming with rage. You cannot imagine, Jacques, how violent he is. I experienced his rage the very day of my departure. He shut me in my room, vomiting frightful abuse on Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard. I shudder when I think of the state he must have been in when he found my room empty, and my sheets still fastened to the window whence I escaped to meet and fly with you."

"You mean to say with Monsieur d'Anquetil, Jael."

"How punctilious you are! Did we not all leave together? But that *calèche* makes me anxious, it is so like my uncle's."

"Rest assured, Jael, that it is some worthy Burgundian's carriage who is going about his business with no thought of us."

"You know nothing about it," said Jael; "I am afraid."

"You surely cannot be afraid that your uncle, decrepit as he has become, will scour the roads in pursuit of you, Mademoiselle. He is occupied with the caballa and his Hebrew speculations."

"You do not know him," she made reply with a sigh. "He is entirely taken up with me. He loves me so much that he execrates the rest of the world. He loves me in a way. . . ."

"In what way?"

"In all ways. . . . In short he loves me."

"Jael, I shudder to hear you. Just Heaven! This Mosaïde loves you without that disinterestedness which is so admirable in an old man, and so befitting an uncle! Tell me everything, Jael. . . ."

"Oh, you can put it into words better than I, Jacques."

"I am stupefied. At his age—is it possible?"

"My friend, you have a white skin and a soul to match it. Everything astonishes you. 'Tis this candour that is your charm. You are deceived with very little trouble. You believe that Mosaïde is a hundred and thirty years old when he is not much more than sixty—that he lived in the great pyramid, when in reality he was a banker at Lisbon. And had I chosen I could have passed in your eyes for a Salamander."

"What, Jael, are you speaking the truth? Your uncle. . . ."

"Yes—and it is the secret of his jealousy. He believes Abbé Coignard to be his rival. He hated him instinctively at first sight. But it is quite another matter now when, having overhead several words of the interview the good Abbé had with me among the thorn-bushes, he may hate him as the cause of my flight and elopement. For, indeed, I was carried off, my friend, and that should put a certain value on me in your eyes. Oh! I was very ungrateful to leave such a good uncle. But I could not endure the slavery in which he kept me

any longer. And then I had an ardent desire to grow rich; it is very natural, is it not, to want nice things when one is young and pretty? We have but one life and that a short one. I have been taught no beautiful lies about the immortality of the soul."

"Alas! Jael," I exclaimed in an ardour of love which lent me hardihood, "I lacked nothing when I was near you at Sablons; what did you lack to be happy?"

She signed to me that Monsieur d'Anquetil was observing us. The trace was mended and the berline rolled on between the vine-covered slopes.

We stopped at Nuits to sup and sleep the night. My good master drank half a dozen bottles of the native wine which marvellously heightened his eloquence. Monsieur d'Anquetil made a good second, glass in hand, but as to coping with him in conversation the gentleman was quite incapable of that.

The cheer was good, the lodging was bad. Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard slept in the low room under the stairs, on a feather-bed which he shared with the inn-keeper and his wife and where they all thought to suffocate.

Monsieur d'Anquetil took the upper room with Jael, where the bacon and onions hung from the rafters. I climbed up to the loft by a ladder and lay down on the straw. My first deep sleep over, the rays of the moon, whose light came through the cracks in the roof, slipped under my eyelids and opened them in time for me to see Jael in her night-cap coming through the trap-door. At the cry I gave she put her finger on her lips.

"Hush!" she said, "Maurice is drunk as a porter

or a lord. He sleeps the sleep of Noah down below."

"Maurice, who is that?" I asked, rubbing my eyes.

"Anquetil. Who else should it be?"

"No one. But *I* did not know that he was called Maurice."

"*I* have not known it long myself. But that is no matter."

"You are right, Jael. That is of no consequence."

She was in her chemise, and the moonlight lay like milk on her naked shoulders. She glided to my side, calling me the tenderest and again the coarsest of names, which slid from her lips in soft murmurings. Then she spoke no more and began to give me kisses as only she knew how and in comparison with which the caresses of other women were insipid.

The restraint and the silence augmented the high tension of my nerves. Surprise, the pleasure of revenge, and maybe, a perverse jealousy, all added flame to my desires. The elasticity of her body and the supple strength of her movements asked, promised, and deserved the most ardent of caresses. We knew those deeps of pleasure that border upon pain.

On going down to the courtyard of the hostelry next morning, I found Monsieur d'Anquetil there, who seemed less odious to me now that I had deceived him.

On his side he seemed more drawn to me than he had been since the beginning of our journey. He spoke to me with familiarity, sympathy, and trustfulness, he reproached me with showing Jael so

little consideration and gallantry, and with not paying her those attentions which a good man should pay to every woman.

"She complains," he said, "of your incivility. Take note of it, my dear Tournebroche; I should be sorry if there were any unpleasantness between her and you. She is a pretty girl and exceedingly fond of me."

The berline had been on its way an hour when Jael, having put her head out of the window, said:

"The *calèche* has turned up again. I would much like to see the faces of the two men in it. But I cannot succeed."

I replied that such a long way off, and in the early morning mist too, we could distinguish nothing.

She made reply that her sight was so keen, that she could distinguish them well notwithstanding the mist and the distance, were they really faces.

"But," added she, "they are not faces."

"What do you think they are then?" I asked with a burst of laughter.

In her turn she asked me what absurd idea had entered my mind that I should laugh in such a stupid fashion, and said:

"They are not faces, they are masks. Those two men are following us and they are masked."

I warned Monsieur d'Anquetil that it appeared we were being pursued by a wretched *calèche*. But he begged me to leave him in peace.

"If a hundred thousand devils were at our heels I should not trouble myself," he exclaimed, "having plenty to do in keeping a watch on this fat hang-dog rascal of an Abbé, who forces the cards in an underhand way and steals all my money. I

should even not be astonished that in thrusting that wretched *calèche* on me in the middle of my game, you were in league with this old cheat. Can a carriage not travel on the road without causing you emotion?"

Jael whispered low in my ear:

"Jacques, I foresee that *calèche* will bring us some evil. I have a presentiment and my presentiments are never wrong."

"Do you want to make me believe you have the gift of prophecy?"

She gravely answered: "Indeed I have."

"What, you a prophetess!" I exclaimed smiling. "How strange!"

"You laugh at me," she said, "and you doubt of it because you have never seen a prophetess so close before. How would you have her look?"

"I thought they had to be virgins."

"That is not at all necessary," she replied with assurance.

The rival *calèche* was lost to sight behind a turning in the road. But Jael's anxiety had affected Monsieur d'Anquetil without his avowing it and he gave orders to the post-boys to increase their speed, promising to pay them good money.

With an excess of solicitude he passed each of them one of the bottles that the Abbé had kept in reserve at the back of the carriage.

The postilions communicated to their horses the ardour they drew from the wine.

"You may make your mind easy, Jael," said he, "at the rate we are going that ancient *calèche* drawn by the horses of the Apocalypse will not catch us up."

"We go like a cat on hot bricks," said the Abbé.

"If only it lasts!" said Jael.

On our right we saw the vine rows planted at intervals fly by on the slopes. On the left the Saône flowed sluggishly. We passed the bridge of Tournus like a whirlwind. On the other side of the river rose the town on a hill crowned with abbey walls strong as a fortress.

"That," said the Abbé, "is one of the innumerable Benedictine abbeys which are sewn like jewels on the robe of ecclesiastical Gaul. Had it pleased God that my destiny had accorded with my character, my life would have slipped by, obscure, easy, and joyful in one of those houses. There is no order for doctrine and way of life I hold equal to the Benedictine. They possess admirable libraries. Happy is he who wears their habit and follows their holy rule! Either from the discomfort I feel at present in being so rudely shaken in this carriage which will not fail to upset shortly in one of the many ruts in which this road is so deeply worn, or more likely as the result of my time of life, which inclines to retirement and serious thought, I long more ardently than ever to seat myself at a table in some old library, where numerous and choice books are gathered together in silence. I prefer their conversation to that of man, and my dearest wish is to await, while busied with intellectual work, the hour when God will withdraw me from this world. I would write histories, preferably that of the Romans, in the decline of the Republic. For it is full of instruction and great deeds. I would divide my zeal between Cicero, St. John Chrysostom and Boethius; my life passed thus modestly and fruitfully would be like unto the garden of the old man of Tarentum.

"I have tried various ways of living, and I judge that the best of all is, while giving myself up to study, to look on in peace at the changes in mankind, and to prolong by the contemplation of centuries and empires the briefness of our days. But sequence and continuity are necessary. They have been more wanting than anything in my life. If, as I hope to do, I succeed in recovering from this present false step I shall endeavour to find an honourable and safe shelter in some learned abbey where letters flourish and are in honour. I already see myself there tasting the peaceful renown of knowledge. Could I but count on this good turn from the helpful Sylphs of whom that old madman d'Astarac speaks and who appear, it is said, when they are invoked by the cabalistic name of *Agla*. . . ."

At the moment my good master pronounced this word a sudden shock overwhelmed us all four under a hail of glass, in such confusion that I found myself suddenly blinded and suffocated beneath Jael's skirts, while Monsieur Coignard, in a stifled voice, denounced Monsieur d'Anquetil's sword for having broken all the teeth he had left, and above my head Jael gave vent to cries which rent all the valleys of Burgundy. Meanwhile Monsieur d'Anquetil was promising the postilions to have them all hung. By the time I succeeded in freeing myself he had already jumped through a broken window; we followed him by the same way my good master and I, and then we all three drew Jael from the overturned carriage. She was unhurt and her first care was to re-adjust her hair.

"Thank Heaven," said my good master, "I have escaped with the loss of a tooth, and one neither

perfect nor white at that. Time, by its attack, had prepared it for its fall."

Monsieur d'Anquetil, with legs wide apart and hands on his hips, was examining the over-turned carriage.

"The rogues have made it in a pretty state," said he. "If we get the horses up, it will fall in the gutter. L'Abbé, it is good for nothing but to play spellicans with."

The horses, fallen one over another, kicked each other with their hoofs. In a confused heap of cruppers, manes, flanks and steaming bellies, one of the postilions was buried, boots in air. The other was spitting blood in the ditch where he had been flung. And Monsieur d'Anquetil shouted at them:

"Fools! I do not know what keeps me from running my sword through your bodies!"

"Monsieur," said the Abbé, "would it not first be better to drag that poor man from amidst the horses where he is buried?"

We all set to work, and when the horses were unharnessed and got up, we knew the extent of the damage.

There was a spring smashed, a wheel broken and one horse lamed. "Fetch a wheelwright," said Monseiur d'Anquetil to the postilions, "and let all be made ready within an hour."

"There is no wheelwright here," said the postilions.

"A farrier."

"There is no farrier."

"A saddler."

"There is no saddler."

We looked round us. In the setting sun the

vine-covered slopes stretched in long peaceful lines to the horizon. On the height smoke rose from a roof near by a belfry. On the other side the Saône, veiled in light mist, was gently effacing the ripple made by a boat which had just passed. The shadows of the poplars were lengthening on the bank. The sharp cry of a bird pierced the vast silence.

"Where are we?" asked Monsieur d'Anquetil.

"Two good leagues from Tournus," replied the postilion who had fallen in the ditch, spitting blood as he did so, "and at least four from Mâcon."

And raising his arm towards the roof smoking on the hill:

"That village up there must be Vallars. Its resources are small."

"God's thunder split you!" said Monsieur d'Anquetil.

While the horses, huddled together, nibbled at each other's necks, we drew near the carriage lying sorrily on its side. The little postilion, who had been drawn from under the horses said:

"As for the spring, that could be remedied by a strong piece of wood fitted to the strap. The carriage would only be slightly more shaky. But there is the broken wheel! And the worst of it is my hat is underneath it."

"Damn your hat," said Monsieur d'Anquetil.

"Your Lordship does not perhaps know it was quite new," said the little postilion.

"And the broken windows!" sighed Jael—sitting on her portmanteau on the road-side.

"If it were only the windows," said my good master, "we could fill their places by lowering the blinds, but the bottles must be in exactly the same

state as the windows. That is what I must make sure of as soon as the berline is right side up. I am equally troubled about my Boethius which I left under the cushions with several other good works."

"They matter nothing," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "I have got the cards in my waistcoat pocket. But are we not going to sup?"

"I was thinking of that," said the Abbé. "It is not in vain that God has given man for his use, the animals which people the earth, sky and water. I am an excellent angler, the careful watch for fish particularly suits my meditative spirit, and the Orne has seen me holding the insidious line and pondering the eternal verities. Have no fear about your supper. If Mademoiselle Jael will kindly give me one of the pins which support her attire I will soon make a hook of it, with which to fish in the river, and I flatter myself that I shall bring you two or three small carp before night-fall, which we will grill over a fire of brushwood."

"I clearly perceive," said Jael, "that we are reduced to a savage state. But I cannot give you a pin, l'Abbé, unless you give me something in exchange, otherwise our friendship runs the risk of being broken. And I do not want that to occur."

"Then I will make an advantageous bargain," said my good master. "I will pay for your pin with a kiss, Mademoiselle."

Thereupon, taking the pin, he put his lips to Jael's cheek in an indescribably charming, graceful and becoming manner.

After wasting a good deal of time we decided on the most sensible method. The tall postilion, who spat blood no longer, was sent to Tournus with a horse to bring back a wheelwright, while his fel-

low lighted a fire in a sheltered spot, for the air was becoming fresh and the wind was rising.

We perceived on the road a hundred paces beyond the scene of our downfall, a hill of soft stone whose base was hollowed in places. In one of these hollows we decided to await the return of the postilion sent as a messenger to Tournus, warming ourselves meanwhile. The second postilion tied the three remaining horses, one of which was lamed, to the trunk of a tree, near by our cave. The Abbé, who had succeeded in making a line with some branches of willow, a string, a cork, and a pin, went off to angle, inclined thereto as much by his philosophic and meditative turn as by the design of bringing us some fish. Monsieur d'Anquetil remaining with Jael and me in the grotto proposed a game of ombre, which three can play at, and which, being Spanish, he said was suitable to such adventurous people as we were for the time being. And in truth, in this stone-pit, at night-fall, on a deserted road, our little party would not have seemed unworthy to figure in one of those encounters of Don Quigeot or Don Quichotte which amuse the servants. So we played at ombre. It is a game which needs to be taken seriously. I made many mistakes and my impatient partner began to be angry, when the fine and smiling countenance of my good master appeared before us in the fire-light. Untying his handkerchief Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard took out four or five small fish, which he cut open with his knife ornamented with the image of the late king as a Roman emperor on a triumphant column, and which he gutted as easily as if he had never lived anywhere but among the fish-wives in the market, so much did he excel in the smallest un-

dertakings as in the greater. While he arranged this small fry over the ashes he said:

"I will confide to you that following the river on its downward course, looking for a favourable bank whence to fish, I perceived the Apocalyptic *calèche* which strikes terror into Mademoiselle Jael. It had stopped some way off behind our berline. You must have seen it pass by here while I was fishing in the river, and it must have brought consolation to the mind of Mademoiselle here."

"We did not see it," said Jael.

"Then it must have started off again, when night had already fallen; and at least you must have heard it."

"We have not heard it," said Jael.

"Then the night must be both blind and deaf. For it is scarcely believable that that *calèche* with neither a broken wheel nor a lame horse, should have stayed on the road. What could it do there?"

"Yes, what could it do there?" said Jael.

"This supper," said my good master, "by its simplicity, recalls those repasts in the Bible, where the pious traveller shares fish from the Tigris with an angel on the river bank. But we need bread, salt and wine. I shall try to get the provisions out of the berline where they are shut up, and see if by chance a bottle has not been preserved intact. For there are times when glass will not break under a blow which would shatter steel. Tournebroche, my son, please give me your flint and steel; and you, Mademoiselle, do not fail to turn the fish. I shall return immediately."

He went off, his somewhat heavy step died away slowly on the road, and soon we heard nothing more.

"The night," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "reminds me of the one which preceded the battle of Parma. For you are not ignorant of the fact that I served under Villars and fought in the war of succession. I was among the scouts. We saw nothing. That is one of the artifices of war. They send men to reconnoître the enemy, who come back without having seen or heard anything. But they make reports out of it after the battle, and that is where the tacticians triumph. Well, then, at nine o'clock in the evening I was sent out as a scout with twelve troopers. . . ."

And he told us of the war of succession, and of his love-passages in Italy; his recital lasted fully a quarter of an hour, after which he exclaimed:

"That rascal of an Abbé does not come back. I wager he is drinking all the wine left in the slings over there."

Thinking then that my good master might be somewhat hampered I got up to go to his aid. The night was moonless, and while the sky glittered with stars the earth remained in such darkness that my eyes, dazzled by the light of the fire, could not penetrate it. Having gone but fifty steps on the road, which was pale in the darkness, I heard in front of me a terrible cry, which did not seem to issue from a human breast, a cry different from all the cries I had heard before, and which froze me with horror. I ran in the direction whence came the shriek of mortal distress. But the darkness and my fear made my steps tremble. Arrived at length at the spot where the carriage lay shapeless and magnified by the dark, I found my good master seated by the edge of the ditch, doubled in two.

I could not distinguish his face. I asked him tremblingly:

"What is the matter with you? Why did you cry out?"

"Yes—why did I cry out?" said he in a changed voice, a voice new to me. "I did not know that I cried out. Tournebroche, have you not seen a man? He knocked against me rather roughly in the dark. He gave me a blow with his fist."

"Come, my good master, raise yourself," I said.

Having raised himself up, he fell back heavily to earth.

I struggled to lift him up, and my hands were wet as I touched his breast.

"You are bleeding!"

"I am bleeding? I am a dead man. He has murdered me. I thought at first it was but a very rough blow. But it is a wound of which I feel I shall never recover."

"Who has struck you, my good master?"

"It was the Jew. I did not see him, but I know it was he. How do I know it was he when I never saw him? Yes, how comes that? What strange happenings! It is unbelievable, is it not, Tournebroche? I have the taste of death in my mouth which cannot be defined. . . . It had to be, my God! But why here rather than there? There lies the mystery! *Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini. . . . Domine, exaudi orationem meam. . . .*"

He prayed for some time in a low voice, and then he said:

"Tournebroche, my son, take the two bottles which I drew from out the slings and put opposite. I can do no more. Tournebroche, where do you

think the wound is? It is in the back I suffer the most, and it seems to me that my life is ebbing from my limbs. My mind is going."

Murmuring these words he quietly fainted away in my arms. I tried to lift him up, but I had but the strength to lay him down on the road. His shirt open, I found the wound; it was in the chest, small and bleeding but little. I tore up my ruffles and applied the strips to the wound. I called out; I cried for help. Soon I thought I heard them coming to my assistance from the direction of Tournus, and I recognised Monsieur d'Astarac. So unexpected was this meeting I was not even surprised at it, overwhelmed as I was by the grief of thus holding the best of masters dying in my arms.

"What means this, my son?" demanded the alchemist.

"Come to my help, Monsieur," I replied, "l'Abbé Coignard is dying. Mosaïde has murdered him."

"It is true," said Monsieur d'Astarac, "that Mosaïde came here in an old *calèche* in pursuit of his niece, and I accompanied him to exhort you, my son, to resume your work in my house. Since yesterday we have pressed close upon your berline, that we saw a short time ago go to pieces in a ditch. At that moment Mosaïde got out of the carriage, and, whether he went for a walk or whether, what is more likely still, he made himself invisible, as he has the power to do, I have not seen him since. It is possible he has already shown himself to his niece to curse her; for such was his design. But he has not murdered Abbé Coignard. It is the Elves, my son, who have killed your master, to punish him for having revealed their secrets. Nothing is more certain."

"Ah! Monsieur," I exclaimed, "what matters whether it be the Jew or the Elves; we must succour him."

"My son, on the contrary, it matters very much," replied Monsieur d'Astarac; "for if he had been struck by a human hand it would be very easy for me to heal him by a magical operation; but whereas he has drawn on himself the enmity of the Elves he cannot escape their infallible vengeance."

As he spoke these last words, Monsieur d'Anquetil and Jael, drawn by my cries, came up with the postilion bearing a lantern.

"What!" said Jael, "is Monsieur Coignard ill?"

And kneeling down by my good master's side, she raised his head and made him inhale her salts.

"Mademoiselle," said I, "you are the cause of his undoing. His death is the vengeance for your elopement. It is Mosaïde who has killed him."

She lifted her face over my good master, pale with horror and glistening with tears.

"Do you suppose, then, it is so easy to be a pretty girl without causing unhappiness?" she asked.

"Alas!" I replied, "what you say is only too true. But we have lost the best of men."

At this moment Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard gave a deep sigh, turned up the whites of his eyes, asked for his copy of Boethius, and fell unconscious again.

The postilion was of opinion we should bear the wounded man to the village of Vallars, situated half a league away on the hill.

"I will fetch the quietest of the three horses which remain to us," said he. "We will fasten the poor man safely on, and take him at a slow pace. I think he is very ill. He has just the look of a courier who was assassinated on St. Michael's Day,

on the road four posts from here, near Senecy, where my intended lives. The poor devil blinked his eyelids and turned up the whites of his eyes like a whore, with all respect to you, Messieurs. And your Abbé did likewise when Mademoiselle tickled his nose with the salts. It is a bad sign for the wounded; as to the girls, they do not die for turning up their eyes in such fashion. Your lordships know that well. And it is a far cry the Lord be praised from the thrills of love to the rigors of death. But it is the same turn of the eye. Stay here, Messieurs, I will go and fetch the horse."

"The rustic is amusing," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "with his turned-up eyes and his die-away lady. In Italy I have seen soldiers die with a fixed stare and their eyes starting out of their head. There is no law about dying of a wound, even among soldiers, where exactitude is pushed as far as it will go. But have the goodness, Tournebroche, in default of some one better qualified to present me to this black-clad gentleman who wears diamond buttons on his coat and whom I divine to be Monsieur d'Astarac."

"Ah! Monsieur," I replied, "take it as done. I have no care for anything but to help my good master."

"So be it," said Monsieur d'Anquetil.

And approaching Monsieur d'Astarac he said:

"Monsieur, I have taken your mistress from you. I am ready to give you satisfaction."

"Monsieur," replied Monsieur d'Astarac, "thanks be to Heaven, I have no connection with any woman, and I do not know what you mean by speaking thus."

At this moment the postilion returned with a horse. My good master had regained consciousness a little. We all four raised him up, and with great difficulty we succeeded in placing him on the horse, on which we fastened him. Then we set out. I sustained him on one side, Monsieur d'Anquetil on the other. The postilion held the bridle and carried the lantern. Jael followed us crying. Monsieur d'Astarac had regained his *calèche*. We advanced carefully. All went well while we kept to the road. But when we had to climb the steep path between the vines, my good master, slipping with every movement of the horse, lost the small amount of strength remaining to him and fainted away once more. We judged it expedient to take him off his horse and to carry him in our arms. The postilion held him by the arm-pits and I carried his feet. The ascent was steep, and I thought several times I should sink down under my living cross on the stones of the path. At length the hill became easier. We threaded our way through a little path bordered with hedges, which twisted up the hillside, and soon we perceived on our left the first roofs of Vallars. At the sight we put down our dismal burden and stopped a moment to take breath. Then taking up our load again we pushed on as far as the village.

A rosy light showed in the east above the horizon. The morning star in the paling heavens shone as white and peaceful as the moon, whose slim crescent paled in the west. The birds began to sing: my good master heaved a sigh.

Jael ran before us, knocking at the doors in quest of a bed and a surgeon. Laden with baskets and hampers the vine-growers were going to the vin-

tage. One of them told Jael that Gaulard in the square had lodging for travellers whether on horse or on foot.

"As to the surgeon, Coquebert," he added, "you see him over there under the barber's basin which serves him as a sign. He is leaving his house to go to his vineyard."

He was a little man, very civil. He told us that since his daughter had married a short time ago he had a bed in his house which would take the wounded man.

At his command, his wife, a fat woman with a white cap surmounted by a felt hat, put sheets on the bed in the ground floor room. She helped us to undress Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard and to put him to bed. Then she went off to find the priest.

Meanwhile Monsieur Coquebert examined the wound.

"You see," said I, "it is but small and bleeds only a little."

"That is not a good sign and does not please me at all, my young Monsieur—I like a big wound that bleeds."

"I see that for a saw-bones and a village barber you have not bad taste," said Monsieur d'Anquetil, "nothing is worse than these small deep wounds which look like mere nothings. Talk to me of a fine gash in the face. That is pleasant to look at and heals immediately. But you must know, my good fellow, that this wounded man is my chaplain and my partner at piquet. Are you man enough to put him on his feet again, in spite of your face, which is rather that of a purge-giver?"

"At your service," replied the surgeon-barber,

bowing. "But I also set broken bones and I dress wounds. I will examine this one."

"Be quick about it, Monsieur," said I.

"Patience," said he. "First we must wash it, and I am waiting till the water is hot in the kettle."

My good master, who had revived a little, said slowly in quite a strong voice:

"Lamp in hand he will visit all the corners of Jerusalem, and that which was hidden in darkness shall be brought forth to daylight."

"What are you saying, my good master?"

"Leave me alone, my son," he replied, "I am occupied with thoughts suitable to my condition."

"The water is hot," said the barber. "Hold this basin close to the bed. I am going to wash the wound."

While he was passing a sponge filled with warm water over my good master's chest, the priest entered the room with Madame Coquebert. He held in his hand a basket and some scissors.

"Here is the poor man, then," said he, "I was going to my vines, but one must tend those of Jesus Christ first of all. My son," he added, drawing near him, "offer up your affliction to Our Saviour. May be it is not so serious as you think. After all, we must comply with the Will of God."

Then turning to the barber he asked:

"Monsieur Coquebert, is it a very urgent case, and can I go to my vineyard? The white grapes can wait, it does no harm if they are over-ripe, and even a little rain will but render the wine better and more abundant. But the red should be picked immediately."

"You say true, Monsieur le curé," replied Coquebert, "I have grapes in my vineyard which are all covered with mildew and which have escaped the heat of the sun only to perish in the rain."

"Alas!" said the curé, "damp and dryness are the vinegrower's two enemies."

"Nothing is truer," said the barber, "but I must probe the wound." So saying he put his finger forcibly in the place.

"Ah! Executioner!" exclaimed the patient.

"Remember," said the curé, "that the Saviour forgave His executioners."

"They were not barbers," said the Abbé.

"That is wickedly said," said the curé.

"You must not chide a dying man for his pleasantries," said my good master. "But I suffer cruelly, this man has murdered me and I die a second time. First it was at the hands of a Jew."

"What does he mean?" asked the curé.

"The best thing, Monsieur le curé, is not to trouble oneself," said the barber. "One should never wish to understand the speeches of the sick. They are but ravings."

"Coquebert," said the curé, "you do not speak rightly. One must listen to the sick in confession, and some Christian who has said nothing good in his life may finish by pronouncing the words which shall open Paradise to him."

"I only speak of things temporal," said the barber.

"Monsieur le curé," said I in my turn, "my good master, Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, is not delirious, and it is only too true that he has been assassinated by a Jew named Mosaïde."

"In that case," replied the curé, "he should see

God's special favour therein Who willed that he should perish by the hand of a descendant of those who crucified His Son. The ways of Providence in this world are always admirable. Monsieur Coquebert, may I go to my vineyard?"

"You may go, Monsieur le curé," replied the barber. "The wound is no light one, but it is not the kind of which one dies at once. It is, Monsieur le curé, one of those wounds which play with the sick person like a cat with a mouse, and at that game we may gain some time."

"That is well," said Monsieur le curé. "Let us thank God, my son, for what life He has left you, but it is precarious and transitory. One must always be ready to leave it."

My good master gravely made reply.

"Exist on this earth as not existing, possess without possessing, for the image of this world passes."

Taking up his basket and his scissors Monsieur le curé said:

"Judging from your speech, my son, rather than from your habit and your bands that I see spread on that stool, I know that you belong to the Church and lead a holy life. Have you taken holy orders?"

"He is a priest," said I, "doctor of theology and professor of eloquence."

"In what diocese?" asked the curé.

"Of Séez in Normandy, Suffragan to Rouen."

"A notable ecclesiastical province," said Monsieur le curé, "but which yields much in antiquity and celebrity to the diocese of Rheims of which I am a priest."

And he went out. Monsieur Jérôme Coignard passed the day peacefully. Jael wished to stay the

night with the sick man. Towards eleven o'clock in the evening, I left Monsieur Coquebert's house and sought a lodging at the inn of the worthy Gaulard. I found Monsieur d'Astarac on the *place*, and his shadow in the moonlight stretched nearly across its whole expanse. He put his hand on my shoulder as was his habit and said with his accustomed gravity:

"It is time that I re-assured you, my son, I merely accompanied Mosaïde for that reason. I see you have been cruelly tormented by goblins. These little spirits of the earth have assailed you, deceived you by all sorts of phantasmagoria, seduced you by a thousand lies, and finally driven you to leave my house."

"Alas, Monsieur!" I replied, "it is true I left your roof with an apparent ingratitude for which I ask your pardon. But I was pursued by the police-sergeants, not by goblins. And my good master has been assassinated. That is no phantasy."

"You may be certain of it," replied the great man, "the unfortunate Abbé has been mortally struck by the Sylphs whose secrets he has revealed. He took from a cupboard some stones which are the handiwork of the Sylphs, and which the latter had left in an imperfect state, differing greatly in brilliancy and pureness from the diamond.

"It is this greed—and the name of *Alga* indiscreetly pronounced which has vexed them the most. Now understand, my son, it is impossible for philosophers to arrest the vengeance of these irascible people. I learnt by a supernatural channel and also from Criton's report the sacrilegious larceny of Monsieur Coignard, who insolently plumed himself on surprising the art by which Salamanders,

Sylphs and Gnomes, ripen the morning dew and insensibly transform it into crystal and diamond."

"Alas! Monsieur, I assure you he never thought of doing so, and that it was that horrible Mosaïde who struck him down with a dagger-thrust on the road."

This speech extremely displeased Monsieur d'Astarac, who invited me in a manner not to be denied to talk no more in such fashion.

"Mosaïde," added he, "is a good enough cabalist to reach his enemies without running after them. Know, my son, that had he wished to kill Monsieur Coignard, he could have done it easily in his room, by the operation of magic. I see that you are still ignorant of the first elements of the science. The truth is that this learned man, informed by the faithful Criton of his niece's flight, took post to regain her, and if need be, to bring her back to his house. Which is what he would certainly have done, had he but discerned in the unhappy being's soul some gleam of repentance and regret. But seeing her quite corrupted and debauched, he preferred to excommunicate and curse her by all the Globes, the Wheels and the Beasts of Ezekiel. That is precisely what he has just done, before my eyes, in the *calèche* where he is quartered apart, so as not to share the bed and the board of Christians."

I was silent, amazed at such maunderings, but this extraordinary man spoke with such eloquence that it did not leave me untroubled.

"Why," said he, "will you not allow yourself to be enlightened by the advice of a philosopher? What wisdom can you oppose to him, my son? Consider then, that yours is less in quantity without

differing in essence. To you, as to me, nature appears as an infinite multitude of images, which one must recognise and classify and which form a sequence of hieroglyphs. You easily distinguish many of these signs to which you attach a meaning, but you are too inclined to content yourself with a vulgar and literal one, and do not sufficiently seek the ideal and the symbolical. Nevertheless, the world is only conceivable as a symbol, and all that is seen in the universe is but pictured writing, which the vulgar among mankind spell out without understanding. Beware, my son, of drawling and braying in this universal tongue, like the savants who fill the academies. But rather receive at my hand the key of all knowledge."

He stopped for a moment and continued his speech in a more familiar tone:

"You are pursued, my son, by foes less terrible than the Sylphs. And your Salamander will have no trouble in ridding you of the goblins as soon as you ask her to do so. I repeat, that I only came here with Mosaïde to give you this good advice and to press you to return to me and continue your work. I understand that you wish to be with your good master until the end. I give you full permission. But do not fail to return hereafter to my house. Farewell! I return to Paris this night with the great Mosaïde whom you have so unjustly suspected."

I promised him all he wished, and dragged myself as far as my wretched bed in the inn, on which I fell, overwhelmed with sorrow and fatigue.

XIX

HE following day, at early dawn, I returned to the surgeon's and there I found Jael by my good master's bedside, sitting up straight on her straw-bottomed chair, her head enveloped in her black mantle, attentive, serious, and docile like a sister of charity. Monsieur Coignard, very red in the face, was dozing. "He has not had a good night," she said in a low voice. "He wandered, he sang, he called me sister Germaine, and made advances to me. I am not offended at that, but it shows how upset he is."

"Alas!" I explained, "if you had not betrayed me, Jael, and scoured the roads with that fine gentleman, my good master would not lie on this bed with his breast pierced."

"It is just our friend's misfortune," she replied, "which causes my consuming regret. But as for the rest it is not worth a thought and I cannot conceive, Jacques, how you can dwell on it at such a moment."

"The thought is always with me," I answered.

"I," said she, "I never think of it at all. You yourself provide more than three fourths of your unhappiness."

"What do you mean by that, Jael?"

"I mean, my friend, that if I supply the stuff you apply the embroidery, and that your imagination enriches the simple reality far too much. I swear

to you that at this present hour I do not myself remember the quarter of what causes you sorrow, and you ponder so obstinately on this subject that your rival is more present to you than even to myself. Think no more of it and let me give this cooling drink to the Abbé who is just waking up."

At this moment Monsieur Coquebert approached the bed with his surgical case, dressed the wound afresh, and said out loud that it was well on the road to recovery. Then drawing me aside he said,

"I can assure you, Monsieur, this good Abbé will not die from the blow he has received. But truth to tell I much fear he will not get over a rather bad attack of pleurisy occasioned by his wound. Just now he is in a condition of high fever. But here comes Monsieur le curé."

My good master recognised him quite well and asked politely how he did.

"Better than the vines," replied the curé. "For they are all spoilt with blight and maggots notwithstanding that the clergy of Dijon held a fine procession against them this year, with cross and banners. But we must have a finer one next year and burn more wax-lights. It will also be necessary for the ecclesiastical court to excommunicate afresh the flies which destroy the grapes."

"Monsieur le curé," said my good master, "they say that you wanton with the girls among the vines. Fie! That is not fitting at your age. In my youth I was, like you, fond of the sex. But years have improved me, and latterly I let a nun pass without speaking to her. You treat damsels and bottles in another fashion, Monsieur le curé. But you do worse still in not saying masses for which you are

paid, and in trafficking in the goods of the Church. You are a bigamist and a simonist."

On hearing these words Monsieur le curé was sadly surprised; his mouth remained opened, and his chaps fell mournfully on either side of his big face.

"What an unworthy insult to the character I bear!" he sighed at last, his eyes on the ceiling. "What a way he talks so near to the judgment-seat of God. Oh! Monsieur l'Abbé, is it for you to talk in such fashion, who have led such a holy life, and have studied so many books?"

My good master raised himself on his elbow. Fever gave him back, in melancholy and unnatural fashion, the jovial air we had loved to see on him.

"It is true," said he, "that I have studied the ancient writers. But I am far from being as well read as was the second *vicaire* of my lord bishop of Séez. Although he looked a donkey, and was one, he was a greater reader than I. For he was cross-eyed, and looking askew he read two pages at a time. What do you say to that, you old rascal of a curé, you old gallant who runs after wenches in the moonlight? Curé, your lady-love looks like a witch. She has a beard on her chin, she is the surgeon-barber's wife. He is fully cuckold and it serves the homunculus right, whose whole medical knowledge reaches no further than the giving of a clyster."

"Lord God, what is he saying?" exclaimed Madame Coquebert. "He must have the devil in him."

"I have heard many sick people talk in delirium," said Monsieur Coquebert, "but no one of them talked so wickedly."

"I perceive," continued the curé, "that we shall have more difficulty than I thought in bringing this sick man to a good end. He is of a more bitter humour and has more impurity in his disposition than I had at first remarked. His speeches are unseemly in an ecclesiastic and a sick person."

"It is the effect of the fever," said the surgeon-barber.

"But," went on the curé, "this fever, if it does not go down may lead him to hell. He has very seriously failed in what is owing to a priest. I shall, nevertheless, return to-morrow to exhort him, for I owe him, by example of Our Lord, infinite pity. But on this score I feel a lively anxiety. Ill-luck will have it that there is a crack in my wine-press, and all the workmen are in the vineyards. Coquebert, do not fail to speak a word to the carpenter, and to call me to the sick man here should his condition become suddenly worse. A host of cares, Coquebert!"

The next day was such a good one for Monsieur Coignard that we nursed the hope that we might yet keep him with us. He took some soup and sat up in bed. He spoke to each of us with his usual gentleness and grace. Monsieur d'Anquetil, who was lodging at Gaulard's, came to see him and, rather thoughtlessly, asked him to play piquet. My good master smilingly promised to do so the following week. But the fever took hold of him at nightfall. Pale, his eyes swimming in unutterable terror, shuddering, and with chattering teeth, he cried:

"There he is, the old Jew! It is the son Judas Iscariot fathered on a she-devil in the shape of a goat. But he shall be hanged on his father's fig-

tree, and his entrails shall be shed on the earth. Stop him . . . he is killing me. . . . ! I am cold." A moment after, throwing back his coverings, he complained of being too hot. "I am very thirsty," said he, "give me some wine. And let it be cool. Madame Coquebert, make haste to go and cool it in the cistern, for the day promises to be burning."

It was night time but he confused the hours in his brain.

"Be quick about it," he re-iterated, to Madame Coquebert, "but do not be as simple-minded as the bellringer of Séez Cathedral, who, on going to draw the bottles from the well where he had put them, perceived his reflection in the water and began crying out 'Hello! Messieurs! Come to my help quickly, for there are antipodeans down there who will drink our wine if we do not see to it.'"

"He is cheerful," said Madame Coquebert. "But a short time ago he made very shocking accusations against me. Had I deceived Coquebert it would not have been with Monsieur le curé, having regard to his age and position."

Monsieur le curé came in at that very moment.

"Well, Monsieur l'Abbé," said he to my master, "in what humour are you to-day? What is there new?"

"Thank God," said Monsieur Coignard, "there is nothing new in my soul. For, as St. Chrysostom said, avoid novelties. Do not adventure on paths which are as yet untried; one wanders unendingly when one begins to wander. I have sad experience of it. And I am lost for having followed unbeaten tracks. I listened to my own counsel and it led me to the pit. Monsieur le curé, I am a miser-

able sinner; the number of my iniquities oppresses me."

"Those are noble words," said Monsieur le curé, "it is God Himself Who dictates them to you. I recognise His inimitable style. Are you not desirous that we should join in furthering the salvation of your soul a little?"

"Willingly" said Monsieur Coignard, "for my impurities rise up against me. I see both great and small rear themselves before me. I see some that are red and some that are black. I see some of the very basest astride of dogs and pigs, and I see others that are fat and stark naked, with teats like leather bottles, and stomachs falling in big folds, and enormous buttocks."

"Is it possible," said Monsieur le curé, "that you should have so distinct a sight of them? But if your faults are such as you say, my son, it were better not to describe them, and to limit yourself to detesting them inwardly."

"Would you have my sins fashioned like Adonis, Monsieur le curé?" said the Abbé. "But enough of that. And you, barber, give me to drink. Do you know Monsieur de la Musardière?"

"Not that I am aware," said Monsieur Coquebert.

"Learn then that he was very fond of women," said my good master.

"It is thereby," said the curé, "that the devil takes great advantage of man. But what do you want to arrive at, my son?"

"You will soon see," said my good master. "Monsieur de la Musardière gave tryst to a maiden in a stable. She went, and he let her go as she came. Do you know why?"

"I am ignorant," said the curé. "But enough of that."

"Not so," continued Monsieur Coignard. "Know then that he took care to have no connection with her for fear of engendering a horse, for which he would have been criminally prosecuted."

"Ah!" said the barber, "he might rather have feared to father a donkey."

"Without doubt," said the curé, "but that does not help us on our way to Paradise. It befits us to take up the good road again. A short time since you gave us such edifying words."

Instead of replying my good master began to sing in quite a strong voice:

To put King Louis in good fettle
They sent for a dozen lads of mettle,
Landerinette.
Who led a jovial life and free,
Landeriri.

"If you want to sing, my son," said Monsieur le curé, "sing rather some beautiful Burgundian carol. You will gladden your soul while you sanctify it."

"Willingly," answered my good master. "There are some by Guy Barozai which I hold, in their apparent rusticity, as finer than the diamond and more precious than gold. This one, for instance:

Then when the time did befall
That Jesus Christ came on to earth,
The ox and ass with their breath
Kept him warm in the stall.
How many an ox and an ass
I know in the kingdom of Gaul,

How many an ox and an ass
Would have grudged him that little, alas!

The surgeon, his wife, and the curé took up together:

How many an ox and an ass
I know in the kingdom of Gaul,
How many an ox and an ass
Would grudge him that little, alas!

And my good master went on in more feeble voice:

But the part of the tale I like best,
Is that the ox and the ass
Both of them let the night pass
Without food or water or rest.
How many an ox and an ass
In stuff, or in silken vest,
How many an ox and an ass
Would grudge him that little, alas!

Then he let his head fall back on the pillow and sang no more.

"There is good in this Christian," said Monsieur le curé. "Much good, and just now again he edified even me by his beautiful words. But he still causes me anxiety, for all hangs on the end; and one does not know what may remain at the bottom of the basket. God in His goodness wills that a single moment should save us; furthermore, this moment must be the last; so that everything depends on a single minute, by the side of which the rest of our life is as nothing. This is what makes me tremble for this sick man for whom the angels and the devils are fighting so furiously. But one must not despair of the divine mercy."

XX

WO days passed in cruel alternations. Thereafter my good master fell into a state of extreme weakness.

"There is no longer any hope," Monsieur Coquebert said in a low voice, "look how his head is sunk into the pillow and notice how sharp his nose has become."

Indeed, my good master's nose, formerly big and red, offered no more than a curved edge as livid as lead.

"Tournebroche, my son," said he, in a voice which was still full and strong, but with a note in it I had not heard before, "I feel that I have but a short time to live. Go and find that good priest that he may hear my confession."

Monsieur le curé was in his vineyard, whither I ran.

"The vintage is done," he told me, "and a more abundant one than I hoped; let us go and assist the poor man."

I took him back to the bedside of my good master and we left him alone with the dying man.

He came out after an hour and said to us:

"I can assure you that Monsieur Jérôme Coignard is dying in admirable sentiments of piety and humility. At his request, and in consideration of his fervour, I am about to give him the holy viaticum. While I put on my alb and stole have the goodness, Madame Coquebert, to send the child who serves low mass for me every day, to the sac-

risty, and prepare the room to receive the blessed sacrament."

Madame Coquebert swept the chamber, put a white coverlet on the bed, placed at the bed-head a small table which she covered with a cloth, put two candlesticks with lighted candles upon it, and a china bowl where a sprig of box lay steeped in the holy water.

Soon we heard the bell being rung in the road by the server, and we saw the cross appear, held up by a child, and the priest clad in white and bearing the sacred elements. Jael, Monsieur d'Anquetil, Monsieur and Madame Coquebert, and I, fell on our knees.

"Pax huic domui," said the priest.

"Et omnibus habitantibus," answered the server.

Then Monsieur le curé took the holy water with which he sprinkled the sick man and the bed.

He remained in meditation for a moment and then said:

"My son, have you no declaration to make?"

"Yes, Monsieur," said Abbé Coignard in a firm voice. "I forgive my assassin."

Then the celebrant, drawing the host from the ciborium, said:

"Ecce agnus Dei, qui tollit peccata mundi."

My good master answered, sighing:

"Shall I speak with My Lord, I who am but dust and ashes? How shall I venture to approach Thee, I who feel that no good exists in me that can give me courage? How can I receive Thee into my house after having so often offended Thine eyes filled with loving-kindness?"

And Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard received the holy viaticum in a profound silence, rent by our sobs

and by the loud noise made by Madame Coquebert in blowing her nose.

After the administration my good master made a sign to me to draw near his bed, and said in a voice weak but distinct:

"Jacques Tournebroche, my son, reject, along with the example I gave you, the maxims I may have proposed to you during my period of folly, which alas! has lasted as long as my life. Fear women and books for the enervation and the pride one gains from them. Be humble in heart and mind. God grants a clearer intelligence to the simple-minded than the learned can ever instil. He is the Giver of all knowledge, my son. Do not listen to those who, like myself, subtilise over good and evil. Do not allow yourself to be touched by the beauty and the finesse of their talk. For the kingdom of God lies not in words but in virtue."

He lay silent, exhausted. I seized his hand lying on the sheet and covered it with my tears and kisses. I told him he was our master, our friend, our father, and that I should not know how to live without him.

And I remained for a long time sunk in sorrow at the foot of his bed.

He passed such a peaceful night that I conceived a sort of despairing hope. This condition lasted all through the day that followed. But towards evening he became restless and murmured such indistinct words that they must forever remain a secret between God and himself.

At midnight he sank once more into deep prostration, and we only heard the light sound of his nails plucking at the sheets. He knew us no longer.

Towards two o'clock the death-rattle began; the hoarse, hurried breath that issued from his chest was loud enough to be heard far off in the village street, and my ears were so filled with it that I thought I could hear it for days following that wretched night. At dawn he made a sign with his hand which we could not understand, and gave a deep sigh. It was the last. His countenance assumed in death a majesty worthy of the genius which had animated it and whose loss will never be repaired.

XXI

MONSIEUR LE CURÉ of Vallars gave Monsieur Jérôme Coignard solemn burial. He sang the funeral mass and gave absolution. My good master was borne to the cemetery attached to the church. And Monsieur d'Anquetil gave a supper at Gaulard's to all the people who had assisted at the ceremony. They drank new wine and sang songs of Burgundy.

The following day I went with Monsieur d'Anquetil to thank Monsieur le curé for his pious care.

"Ah," said the holy man, "this priest has given us great consolation by his edifying end. I have seen few Christians die in such admirable sentiments, and the memory of them should be preserved on his tomb in a fine inscription. You are both of you clever enough to do this successfully, and I will see to it that the epitaph of the defunct is engraved on a large white stone in the fashion and order in which you shall compose it. But bear in mind, in thus making the stone speak, that it proclaim but the praises of God."

I begged him to believe that I would bring all my zeal to bear on it, and Monsieur d'Anquetil promised on his part to give it a gallant and graceful turn.

"I will try my hand," said he, "at French verse, modelled on those of Monsieur Chapelle."

"Well and good," said Monsieur le curé. "But are you not curious to see my wine-press? The

wine will be excellent this year and I have gathered enough for my use and for that of my servant. Alas! were it not for the blight we should have had far more."

After supper Monsieur d'Anquetil asked for the inkstand and began to compose French verses. Then, impatiently, he flung pen, ink, and paper away from him.

"Tournebroche," said he, "I have only written two lines and I am not certain if even those are good; here they are such as they have come to me:

"Monsieur Coignard here doth lie,
Soon or late we all must die."

I answered that they had this much good in them that they needed no third.

And I spent the night in turning a Latin epitaph in the following manner:

D.O.M.
HIC JACET
in spe beatae aeternitatis
DOMINUS HIERONYMUS COIGNARD
presbyter
quondam in Bellovacensi collegio
eloquentiae magister eloquentissimus
Sagiensis episcopi bibliothecarius solertissimus
Zozimi Panopolitani ingeniosissimus
translator
opere tamen immaturata morte intercepto
periit enim cum Lugdunum peteret
judea manu nefandissima
id est a nepote Christi carnificum
in via trucidatus
anno aet. lii.
comitate fuit optima doctissimo convitu

ingenio sublimi
facetiis jucundus sententiis plenus
donorum Dei laudator
fide devotissima per multas tempestates
constanter munitus
humilitate sanctissima ornatus
saluti suae magis intentus
quam vano et fallaci hominum judicio
sic honoribus mundanis
nunquam quaesitis
sibi gloriam sempiternam
meruit.

Which means

HERE LIES
in hope of blissful eternity
MESSIRE JEROME COIGNARD
priest
formerly eloquent professor of eloquence
in the college of Beauvais
most zealous librarian to the bishop
of Séez
author of a fine translation from Zozimus
the Panipolitan
which unhappily he left unfinished
when overtaken by premature death.
He was struck down on the Lyons road
in the 52nd year of his age
by the scoundrelly hand of a Jew
and thus perished a victim to a descendant of the executioners of Jesus Christ.
He was agreeable in intercourse
learned in conversation
and of a lofty genius
flowing with joyful talk and admirable precepts
and praised God in his works.
Through the tempest of life he kept

an unshaken faith
more careful for the salvation of his soul
than for the empty and deceitful goodwill of mankind
it was while living without honours
in this world
that he directed his path to eternal glory.

XXII

HREE days after my good master had rendered up his soul Monsieur d'Anquetil decided to set off once more. The carriage was mended. He gave orders to the postilions to be ready for the following morning. His society had never been pleasing to me. In the sad mood I was in it had become odious. I could not bear the idea of following him with Jael. I resolved to seek employment at Tournus or Mâcon and to live there hidden until the storm having abated, it would be possible for me to return to Paris where I knew my parents would receive me with open arms. I made known this plan to Monsieur d'Anquetil and excused myself for not accompanying him further. He exerted himself at first to keep me with a good grace which he had not led me to expect, then he willingly gave me my leave. Jael was more regretful over it, but being naturally sensible she understood the reasons I had for leaving her.

The night preceding my departure, while Monsieur d'Anquetil drank and played cards with the surgeon-barber, we went out on to the market-place, Jael and I, to breathe the air. It was scented with grasses and filled with the song of crickets.

"What a beautiful night," I said to Jael, "the year will bring no more like it, and perhaps in all my life I shall never again see one so sweet."

Before us the village cemetery, flower-filled, spread its immobile waves of grass, and the moonlight whitened the scattered grave stones on the dark herbage. The thought came to us both at the same time to go and say good-bye to our friend. The spot where he reposed was marked by a cross sprinkled with pictured tears, whose foot sank in the soft earth. The stone on which the epitaph was to be inscribed was not put up yet. We sat down near by, on the grass and there, from unconscious and natural inclination, we fell into one another's arms, without fear of offending with our kisses the memory of a friend whose profound wisdom rendered him indulgent to human weaknesses.

All at once Jael whispered in my ear, where for the moment her lips happened to be:

"I see Monsieur d'Anquetil on the cemetery wall, and he is looking keenly in our direction."

"Can he see us in the shadow?" I asked.

"He can certainly see my white skirts," she replied. "It is quite enough to make him want to see more."

I was already thinking of drawing my sword and I was quite decided to defend two existences which at the moment were indeed all but one. Jael's calm astonished me; nothing in her gestures or her voice betrayed fear.

"Go," said she, "fly, have no fear for me. It is a surprise which I have more or less desired. He was beginning to tire, and this is excellent for reawakening his taste and adding a spice to his love. Go, and leave me. The first few moments will be hard to bear for he is of a passionate disposition. He will beat me but I shall only be dearer to him afterwards. Farewell."

"Alas," I exclaimed "did you but take me, Jael, to sharpen the desire of a rival?"

"I am surprised that you too wish to quarrel with me. Go, I tell you."

"What, and leave you thus?"

"It must be. Farewell. He must not find you here. I want to make him jealous, but with discretion. Farewell, farewell."

I had scarcely taken a few steps in the labyrinth of tombs when Monsieur d'Anquetil having come near enough to recognise his mistress cried and swore loud enough to wake all these village dead. I was impatient to free Jael from his wrath. I thought he would kill her. Already I was gliding to her rescue in the shadow of the tombs. But after some minutes, while I watched them carefully, I saw Monsieur d'Anquetil push her out of the cemetery and take her to Gaulard's inn, with the remains of a fury she was well capable of pacifying alone and without help.

I regained my room when they had gone back to theirs. I did not sleep that night, and spying on them in the dawn, through the opening in the curtains, I saw them cross the courtyard of the inn with great show of friendship.

Jael's departure increased my sadness. I threw myself full-length in the middle of my room, and, my face in my hands, wept till evening.

XXIII

AT this period my life loses the interest it had borrowed from circumstances, and my destiny, conforming once more with my character, offers nothing but what is commonplace. If I prolonged my memoirs my narrative would soon appear insipid. I will bring it to a close in a few words. Monsieur le curé of Vallars gave me a letter of recommendation to a wine merchant in Mâcon, with whom I found employment for two months, at the end of which my father wrote he had arranged my affairs and that I could return to Paris without any danger.

I immediately took the coach and made the journey with some recruits. My heart beat as if it would burst when I saw once again the rue St. Jacques, the clock of St. Benoît-le-Bétourné, the sign-board of the *Trois Pucelles,* and the *St. Catherine* of Monsieur Blaizot.

My mother wept at the sight of me. I wept, we embraced, and we wept anew. My father, coming in all haste from the *Petit Bacchus,* said, with softened dignity:

"Jacquot, my son, I will not hide from you that I was very irritated with you when I saw the police enter the *Reine Pédauque* to take you, or failing you, to take me in your place. They would not listen to anything, affirming that it would be per-

mitted to me to explain myself in prison. They sought you on a complaint lodged by Monsieur de la Guéritaude. I formed a horrible notion of your evil ways in my own mind. But having learnt from your letters that they were but peccadilloes I thought only of seeing you again. I have consulted many a time with the landlord of the *Petit Bacchus* on the means of hushing up your affair. He always answered me, 'Maître Léonard, go and find the judge with a big bag of *écus* and he will give you back your son as white as snow.' But *écus* are rare here, and there is neither chicken, goose nor duck which lays golden eggs in my house. At the most, nowadays, the poultry pays but for the fire in my chimney. By good luck your sainted and worthy mother had the idea of going to find Monsieur d'Anquetil's mother, who we knew was busied in her son's favour, sought for at the same time as you and for the same affair. For I recognise, my Jacquot, that you have played the scoundrel in company with a gentleman, and my heart is too well placed not to feel the honour which is thus reflected over all the family. Your mother then demanded an interview with Madame d'Anquetil in her house in the *faubourg* St. Antoine. She had dressed herself neatly as if she were going to mass, and Madame d'Anquetil received her kindly. Your mother is a saintly woman, Jacquot, but she is not very well-bred, and she spoke at first unconventionally and in an unseemly fashion. She said, 'Madame, at our age, nothing is left us after God, but our children.' It was not the thing to say to that great lady who still has her lovers."

"Be quiet, Léonard," said my mother, "Madame d'Anquetil's behaviour is not known to you, and I

must have spoken well enough to the lady, for she replied:

" 'Be at peace, Madame Menétrier, I will act for your son as for my own; count on my zeal.' And you know, Léonard, that before two months had elapsed we received the assurance that our Jacquot could return to Paris without any anxiety."

We supped with good appetite. My father asked me whether I counted on remaining in Monsieur d'Astarac's service. I replied that after the ever-to-be-regretted death of my good master I had no wish to find myself with that cruel Mosaïde and with a gentleman who paid his servants only in fine speeches. My father obligingly invited me to turn his spit as before.

"Latterly I have given the employment to brother Ange, Jacquot," he told me, but he acquitted himself less well than Miraut and even than you. Will you not take your place on the stool again in the chimney-corner, my son?"

My mother who, simple as she was, did not lack judgment, shrugged her shoulders and said:

"Monsieur Blaizot, who is a bookseller at the sign of *St. Catherine,* has need of an assistant. That employment, my son, would fit you like a glove. You have gentle ways and good manners. That is what is suitable for the selling of Bibles."

I went at once and offered myself to Monsieur Blaizot, who took me into his service.

My misfortunes had rendered me wise. I was not discouraged by the humbleness of my task, and I fulfilled it with exactitude, handling the feather-brush and the broom to my patron's satisfaction.

My duty was to pay a call on Monsieur d'Astarac. I presented myself at the great alchemist's

the last Sunday in November after the mid-day dinner. The distance is great from the rue St. Jacques to the Cross of Les Sablons, and the almanack does not lie when it tells us that the days are short in November. When I arrived at La Roule night had fallen, and a dark fog covered the deserted road. I meditated sadly in the gloom.

"Alas!" I said to myself, "it will soon be a year since for the first time I took the same road in the snow in the company of my good master, who rests now on a vine-covered hill in a village of Burgundy. He fell asleep in the hope of eternal life. And that is a hope it befits us to share with so learned and wise a man. God keep me from ever doubting the immortality of the soul. But one must own to one's self that all that belongs to a future existence and to another world appertains to those imperceptible truths which one believes without being affected by them, and which have neither taste nor savour, in such wise that one swallows them without being aware of them. For my part, I am not consoled by the thought of one day meeting Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard once more in Paradise. Surely he would not be recognisable, and his speeches would not have the charm they borrowed from circumstances."

While making these reflections I saw before me a great light spreading over half the sky; the fog was reddened with it right over my head, and the light palpitated at its source. A heavy smoke mingled with the vapours of the air. I feared at once that it was the *château* d'Astarac on fire. I hastened my steps, and I soon saw that my fears were but too well-founded. I perceived the Calvary of Les Sablons opaquely black against a torrent of flame

and I saw, nearly at the same time, the *château* whose windows all blazed as if for a sinister revel. The little green door was burst open. Shadows moved in the park and whispered in horror. They were the inhabitants of the town of Neuilly who had hastened thither out of curiosity and to bring help. Some were throwing jets of water from a pump, which fell like glittering rain in the blazing furnace. A thick column of smoke rose above the *château.* A rain of sparks and cinders fell around me, and I soon perceived that my clothes and hands were blackened with them. I thought with despair that this dust which filled the air was the remains of so many beautiful books and precious manuscripts which had been my master's joy, the remains perhaps of Zozimus the Panipolitan, at which we had worked together during the noblest hours of my life.

I had seen Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard die. This time it was his very soul, his shining and gentle soul, that I thought I saw reduced to powder with the queen of libraries. I felt that a part of myself was destroyed at the same time. The wind which was rising added strength to the fire, and the flames roared like hungry throats. Seeing a man from Neuilly, blacker than I was myself, and wearing but his waistcoat, I asked him if they had saved Monsieur d'Astarac and his people.

"No one," said he, "has come out of the *château* except an old Jew, who was seen to escape with some bundles towards the marshes. He lived in the keeper's cottage on the river, and was hated for his origin and for the crimes of which he was suspected. Some children pursued him, and in flying he fell into the Seine. He was fished out dead,

holding to his heart a grammary and six gold cups. You can see him on the bank in his yellow robe. He is awful, with open eyes."

"Ah," I replied, "his end was due to his crimes. But his death will not give me back the best of masters, whom he assassinated. Tell me again, has no one seen Monsieur d'Astarac?"

At the moment when I asked this question I heard one of the restless shadows near me give a terror-stricken cry:

"The roof is going to fall in."

Then I recognised with horror the tall black form of Monsieur d'Astarac running along the gutter. The alchemist cried in a ringing voice:

"I rise on the wings of the flame into the abode of divine life."

He spoke: all at once the roof gave way with a horrible crash, and flames high as mountains enveloped the friend of the Salamanders.

XXIV

HERE is no love can outlast absence. The memory of Jael, cruel at first, softened little by little, and there remained to me but a vague restlessness of which she was not even the unique object.

Monsieur Blaizot waxed old. He withdrew to Montrouge, to his little house in the fields, and sold me his stock-in-trade in consideration of an allowance for life. Becoming, in his place, sworn bookseller at the sign of the *Image de Sainte Catherine,* I made my father and mother retire there, for their cook-shop had not smoked for some time past. I had a liking for my modest shop and I was solicitous to deck it. I nailed old Venetian maps on the doors, and these ornamented with allegorical engravings, which make an odd and old-world ornamentation no doubt, but pleasant to friends of the classics. My knowledge, on the condition that I took care to hide it, did me no harm in my business. It would have stood more in my light had I been, like Marc-Michel Rey, bookseller and publisher, and obliged as he was to earn my living at the expense of public stupidity.

I stock, as they say, the classic authors, and it is a commodity which has its price in this learned rue St. Jacques, whose antiquities and illustrious occupants it would give me pleasure one day to write of. The first Parisian printer set up his venerable

presses here. The Cramoisys,* whom Guy Patin calls the kings of the rue St. Jacques, sent forth from here the collected works of our historians. Before the College of France rose up, the king's readers Pierre Danès,† François Votable, and Ramus,‡ gave their lessons in a shed where resounded the quarrels of porters and washerwomen. And how can we forget Jean de Meung, who, in a little house in this street, composed the Romaunt of the Rose? §

I have the run of all the house, which is old, and dates at least from the Gothic period, as appears in the beams of wood which cross on the narrow façade, in the two projecting storeys, and in the overhanging roof laden with moss-grown tiles. It has but one window on each floor. The one on the first floor is full of flowers in all seasons and furnished with strings on which convolvulus and nasturtium climb in the spring-time. My good mother plants and waters them.

It is the window of her room. One can see her from the street, reading her prayers from a book printed in large type, above the sign of *Sainte Catherine*. Years, devotion, and maternal pride have given her an air of dignity, and to see her waxen

* *Les Cramoisy.* Family of printers living in Paris, 17th century.

† *Danès,* Pierre. Hellenist, b. Paris 1497.

‡ *Ramus.* Pierre La Ramée, known as Ramus. Philosopher and grammarian. He was the precursor of Descartes. Killed at the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, 1515–1572.

§ Jacques Tournebroche was unaware that François Villon lived in the rue St. Jacques, at the house in the cloister of St. Benoît, called the house of the green door. Monsieur Jérôme Coignard's pupil would no doubt have taken pleasure in recalling the memory of this old poet who, like him, had known divers kinds of people. [A. France.]

face under the high white coif one would swear it was that of a rich *bourgeoise*.

My father, with advancing years, has also acquired a certain dignity. As he likes fresh air and movement I occupy him in carrying the books to town. At first I had employed brother Ange, but he asked for alms of my clients, made them kiss relics, stole their wine, caressed their maid-servants, and left half my books in all the gutters of the neighbourhood, I withdrew his appointment as soon as possible. But my good mother, whom he makes believe he possesses secrets wherewith to gain heaven, gives him soup and wine. He is not a bad man and he has ended by inspiring me with a sort of attachment.

Many savants and some of our wits frequent my shop. And it is the great advantage of my position to be put in daily intercourse with people of worth. Among those who come oftenest to turn over the leaves of the new books and converse familiarly with one another, are historians as learned as Tillemont, ecclesiastical orators who equal Bossuet and even Bourdaloue in eloquence; poets, comic and tragic; theologians in whom pureness of morals is joined to solidity of doctrine; esteemed authors of Spanish romances; geometricians and philosophers capable, like Monsieur Descartes, of measuring and weighing universes. I admire them, I relish their lightest words. But none, to my thinking, equals in genius the good master I had the misfortune to lose on the Lyons road; none recalls that incomparable elegance of thought, the sweet sublimity, that amazing richness of a soul always overflowing and pouring forth like the urns of those personified rivers

one sees in marble in the gardens; none offers me that inexhaustible wellspring of knowledge and morals where I had the happiness to slake the thirst of my youth; none gives me even the shadow of that grace, that wisdom, that vigour of thought which shone in Monsieur Jérôme Coignard. Him I hold for the kindliest soul that ever blossomed on this earth.

THE OPINIONS OF JÉRÔME COIGNARD

BY ANATOLE FRANCE

A TRANSLATION BY
MRS. WILFRID JACKSON

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THE OPINIONS OF JÉRÔME COIGNARD

THE ABBÉ JÉRÔME COIGNARD

TO OCTAVE MIRBEAU

HERE is no need for me to tell over again here the life of Monsieur l'Abbé Jérôme Coignard, professor of oratory at the college of Beauvais, librarian to Monseigneur de Séez, *Sagiensis episcopi bibliothecarius solertissimus,* as his epitaph has it, later on secretary at the Cemetery of the Holy Innocents, and finally curator of that queen of libraries (the Astaracian), whose loss is for ever to be deplored. He perished, assassinated, on the Lyons road, by a Jew cabalist of the name of Mosaïde (*Judæa manu nefandissima*), leaving several incomplete works, and the memory of his admirable familiar conversation. All the circumstances of his odd existence and tragic end have been reported by his disciple Jacques Menétrier, called Tournebroche, or Turnspit, because he was the son of a cook in the Rue St. Jacques. This Tournebroche professed for

him whom it was his habit to speak of as his good master, a lively and tender admiration. "His was the kindliest soul," said he, "that ever blossomed on this earth." Modestly and faithfully he edited the memoirs of the Abbé, who lives again in the work as Socrates does in the Memorabilia of Xenophon.

Observant, exact, and charitable, he drew a portrait full of life and instinct with a loving faithfulness. It is a work that makes one think of those portraits of Erasmus by Holbein that one sees in the Louvre, at Bâle, or at Hampton Court, the delicacy of which never wearies the sense of appreciation. In short, he left us a masterpiece. It will cause surprise no doubt, that he was not careful to have it printed. Moreover, he could have published it himself, for he set up as a bookseller in the Rue St. Jacques at the sign of the *Image de Sainte Catherine,* where he succeeded Blaizot.

Perhaps, living as he did among books, he feared to add, if it were but a few leaves, to the horrible hoard of blackened paper that mildews unseen on the book-stalls. We may share his disgust when we pass the twopenny box on the quays, where the sun and the rain slowly consume pages written for immortality. Like those pathetic death's-heads that Bossuet sent to the Abbot of la Trappe to divert his

solitude, here are subjects for reflection fitted to make the man of letters conceive the vanity of writing. I may say, for my part, that between the Pont Royal and the Pont Neuf, I have felt that vanity to the full. I should incline to believe that Abbé Coignard's pupil never printed his work because, formed by so good a master, he judged sanely of literary glory, and esteemed it at its worth, and that is exactly nothing. He knew it for uncertain, capricious, subject to every vicissitude, and dependent on circumstances themselves petty and wretched. Seeing his contemporaries, ignorant, abusive, and mediocre, he saw no reason to hope that their posterity would suddenly become learned, balanced, and reliable. He merely divined that the Future, a stranger to our quarrels, would accord indifference in default of justice. We are well-nigh assured that, great and small, the Future will unite us in oblivion and cover us in a peaceful uniformity of silence. But if, by some extraordinary chance, that hope deceives us, if future generations keep some memory of our name and writings, we can foresee that they will only make acquaintance with our thoughts by the ingenious labour of gloss and super-gloss which alone perpetuates works of genius through the ages. The long life of a masterpiece is

assured only at the price of quite pitiable intellectual hazards, in which the gabble of pedants reinforces the ingenious word-twisting of æsthetic souls. I am not afraid to say that, at the present day, we do not understand a single line of the Iliad, of the Divine Comedy, in the sense primitively attaching to it. To live is to change, and the posthumous life of our written-down thoughts is not free from the rule: they only continue to exist on condition that they become more and more different from what they were when they issued from our minds. Whatsoever in future may be admired in us, will have become altogether alien from us.

Possibly Jacques Tournebroche, whose simplicity we know, did not put himself all these questions in reference to the little book under his hand. It would be an insult to think that he had an exaggerated opinion of himself.

I think I know him. I have meditated over his book. Everything he says, and everything he doesn't say, betrays an exquisite modesty of soul. If, however, he was not without knowledge of his talent, he knew also that it is precisely talent that is least pardonable. In people of note we tolerate easily baseness of soul and falseheartedness. We

are quite content that they should be bad or cowardly, and their good-luck even does not raise over much envy so long as it is not merited. Mediocrities are at once raised up, and carried along, by the surrounding nobodies who are honoured in them. The success of a commonplace person disturbs nobody. Rather, it secretly flatters the mob. But there is an insolence of talent which is expiated by dumb hatred, and calumnies not loud but deep. If Jacques Tournebroche consciously renounced the painful honour of irritating the foolish and the wicked by eloquent writing, one can only admire his good sense, and hold him the worthy scholar of a master who knew mankind. However it may be, the manuscript of Jacques Tournebroche, being left unpublished, was lost for more than a century.

I had the extraordinary good luck to find it again at a general broker's on the Boulevard Montparnasse, who spreads behind the dirtied panes of his shop, *croix du Lis, médailles de Sainte-Hélène,* and *decorations de Juillet,* without a suspicion that he is furnishing the generations a melancholy lesson on peacemaking. This manuscript was published under my care in 1893, under the title: *La Rotisserie de la Reine Pédauque.* I refer the reader to it.

He will find there more novelties than he looks for ordinarily in an old book. But it is not with that book that we have to do here.

Jacques Tournebroche was not content to make known the doings and sayings of his master in a connected recital. He was careful to collect much discourse and conversation of Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard that had not found place in the memoirs (for that is the name we must give to *La Rotisserie de la Reine Pédauque*) and he made a little note-book of it, which has fallen into my hands along with his other papers.

It is the note-book that I print now under the title: *The Opinions of The Abbé Jérôme Coignard.* The kind and gracious welcome the public gave the preceding work by Jacques Tournebroche, encourages me to commence forthwith these dialogues, in which we meet once more the former librarian of Monseigneur de Séez with his indulgent wisdom, and that kind of generous scepticism to which his considerations tend, so mingled with contempt and kindliness for man. I have no notion of taking responsibility for the ideas expressed by this philosopher on divers questions of politics and morality. My duties, as editor, merely bind me to present my author's thought in the most favourable

light. His unfettered understanding trampled vulgar beliefs underfoot, and did not side uncritically with popular opinion, except in matters touching the Catholic faith, wherein he was immovable. In anything else he did not fear to oppose his age. Were it only for that he would merit esteem. We owe him the gratitude due to minds that have fought against prejudices. But it is easier to praise than to imitate them. Prejudices melt away and grow unceasingly with the eternal mobility of the clouds. They are by nature most imposing, until they become hateful, and men are rare who are free from the superstition of their period, and look squarely at what the crowd dares not face. Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard was independent in a humble walk of life; enough, I think to put him far above a Bossuet, and above all the great people that glitter, according to their degree, in the traditional pomp of custom and belief.

But while we hold that Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard lived as a free man, enfranchised from common errors, and that the spectre of common passions and fears had no empire over him, we must further observe that his surpassing intelligence had originality of outlook on nature and society, and only wanted, in order to astonish and delight mankind by some

vast and beautiful mental engineering feat, the skill or the will to scatter sophisms, like cement, in the interstices between truth and truth. It is only in that way that great systems of philosophy are built up and held together by the mortar of sophistry.

The synthetic faculty was wanting in him, or, (if you like), the art and law of symmetry. Without it, he was bound to appear, as in fact he did, a kind of wonderful compound of Epicurus and St. Francis of Assisi.

Those two, it seems to me, were the best friends that suffering humanity has yet met on its confused progress through life.

Epicurus freed the soul from empty fears and taught it to proportion its idea of happiness to its miserable nature and feeble powers. Good St. Francis, tenderer and more material, led the way to happiness by interior vision, and would have had souls expand like his, in joy, in the depths of an enchanted solitude. Both were helpful, one, to destroy illusions that deceive, the other, to create illusions from which one does not wake.

But it does not do to exaggerate. Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard was certainly not the equal, in action or in thought, of the boldest of the sages, nor of the most ardent of the saints. The truths that

he discovered he could not fling himself upon headlong. In his hardiest exploration he maintained the pose of a peaceful pedestrian. He did not sufficiently except himself from the contempt other men inspired in him. He lacked that valuable illusion that sustained Descartes and Bacon, who believed in themselves when they believed in no one else. He had doubts of the witness he bore, and scattered heedlessly the treasures of his mind. That confidence, however common in thinkers, was withheld from him, the confidence in himself as the superior of the greatest wits. It is an unpardonable fault, for glory is only given to those who importune it. In Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard it was, moreover, a weakness, and an illogicality. Since he pushed philosophical audacity to its farthest limits, he should not have scrupled to proclaim himself the first of men. But his heart remained simple and his soul pure, and his poorness of spirit that knew not how to rear itself above the world, did him an irreparable wrong. But need I say that I love him better as he was? I am not afraid to affirm that Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, philosopher and Christian, mingled in an incomparable union the epicurism that wards off grief, and the holy simplicity that conducts to joy.

It is to be remarked that not only did he accept the idea of God as furnished him by the Catholic faith, but further, that he tried to uphold it against argument of the rationalistic kind. He never imitated that practical address of professed Deists, who make a moral, philanthropical and prudish God for their own use, with whom they enjoy the satisfaction of a perfect understanding. The strict relations they establish with Him give much authority to their writings, and much consideration to their persons, before the public. And this God, akin to the government, temperate, weighty, exempt from fanaticism, and who has His following, is a recommendation to them in salons, academies, and public meetings. Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard did not figure the Eternal to himself in so profitable a light. But considering the impossibility of conceiving of the world otherwise than under the category of intelligent beings, and that the cosmos must be held to be intelligible, even if but to demonstrate its absurdity, he referred the cause to an intelligence he called God, leaving the term in its infinite vagueness, relying for the rest on theology, which as we know, treats of the unknowable with minutest accuracy.

This reserve, which marks the limits of his un-

derstanding, was fortunate if, as I believe, it deprived him of the temptation to nibble at some appetising system of philosophy, and kept him from putting his nose into one of those mouse-traps wherein independent minds are in such hurry to get caught. At his ease in the big old rat-run, he found more than one opening to look out on the world and observe nature. I do not share his religious beliefs, and am of opinion that they deceived him, as they have deceived, for their good or ill, so many generations of men. But it looks as if the old errors were less vexatious than the new, and that, since we are bound to go wrong, it were best to hold by illusions that have lost their sparkle.

It is certain, though, that Abbé Coignard, in accepting Christian and Catholic principles, did not deny himself the deduction of some original conclusions therefrom. Rooted in orthodoxy, his luxuriant spirit flourished singularly in epicurism and in humility. As I have said before he always tried to chase away those phantoms of the night, those empty fears, or as he called them, those gothic diabolisms, which make the pious existence of the simple bourgeois a kind of sordid and day-long witches' sabbath. Theologians have, in our own

day, accused him of carrying hope to excess, and even beyond bounds. I meet the reproach once more under the hand of an eminent philosopher.*

I do not know if Monsieur Coignard really reposed an exaggerated trust in divine goodness. But certainly he conceived the meaning of grace in a large and natural sense, and the world, in his eyes,

* (Monsieur Jean Lacoste wrote in the *Gazette de France* of May 20, 1893): Monsieur l'Abbé Jérôme Coignard is a priest full of knowledge, humility and faith. I do not say that his conduct was always an honour to his bands or that his robe was unstained. But if he succumbs to temptation, if the devil has in him an easy prey, he never loses confidence; he hopes by God's grace to fall no more, and to reach the glories of Paradise. And, in fact, he affords us the spectacle of a very edifying death. Thus a grain of faith beautifies life, and Christian humility well becomes our human weakness.

Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, if he be not a saint, perhaps deserves purgatory. But he deserves the fire a very long time, and has run risk of hell. For in his acts of humility, though sincere, there was scarcely any repentance. He reckoned too much on the grace of God, and made no effort to help the workings of grace. That is why he fell back into his sin. Thus faith availed him little, and he was nearly a heretic, for the holy council of Trent, by its canons VI. and IX. in its sixth session, declared all those anathema who pretend "that it is not in the power of man to give up his evil ways" and who have such reliance on faith that they think faith alone can save them "without any motion of the will." Thus the divine mercy extended to Abbé Coignard is truly miraculous and beyond ordinary channels.

less resembled the deserts of the Thebaid than the garden of Epicurus. He took his way through it with that daring ingenuousness which is the most marked trait in his character, and the foundation of his teaching.

Never did a mind show itself at once so bold and so pacificatory, nor show its disdain with greater gentleness. His rule conjoined the freedom of the cynics and the innocence of the primitive community of the Portiuncula. Tenderly, he despised men. He tried to show them that having no measure of greatness about them save their capacity for sorrow, they could lay up for themselves nothing useful or beautiful save pity; that fit only for desire or suffering, they should practise themselves in the indulgent and the pleasure-giving virtues. He came to consider pride as the source of greatest evil, and the one vice against nature.

It seems likely indeed, that men make themselves miserable by the exaggerated opinion they have of themselves and their kind, and that if they could form a humbler and truer notion of human nature they might be kinder to others and kinder to themselves.

His sympathetic regard, then, urged him to humiliate his fellows, in the opinions, their knowledge,

their philosophy, and institutions. He put his heart into showing them that their weak and silly nature has never constructed nor imagined anything worth the trouble of attacking and defending very briskly, and that if they knew the crudity and weakness of their greatest works, such as their laws and their empires, they would only fight in fun or in play, like children building sand-castles by the sea.

We must not be astonished or scandalised then, that he depreciated every conception which makes for the honour and glory of mankind, at the expense of their peace. The majesty of the law did not impose on his clear-sighted intellect, and he deplored the fact that the wretched were subjected to so many restraints, of which in most cases, they could not discover the origin or the meaning. All principles appeared equally contestable to him. He had at last come to believe that members of a state would never condemn so many of their kind to infamy, if it were not to taste, by contrast, the pleasure of respectability. Such a view made him prefer bad company to good, after the example of Him who lived among publicans and sinners. But he kept his purity of heart, his gift of sympathy, and the treasure of his pity. I shall not speak here of his actions, which are recounted in *La Rotisserie de la*

Reine Pédauque. I have no means of knowing whether, as was said of Madame de Mouchy, he was more worthy than his life. Our actions are not altogether our own; they depend less on us than on fortune. They come to us from all sides. We do not always merit them. Our inviolable mind is all we have of our very own. Thence the vanity of the world's judgments. Nevertheless, I can say with pleasure that our leading lights have found Monsieur Coignard an amiable and pleasing person. Indeed one must be a Pharisee not to see in him a beautiful creation of God. So much said I hasten to return to his teachings, which alone matter here.

What he had least of was the bump of veneration. Nature had denied it him, and he took no steps to acquire it. He feared lest, in exalting some, he should cast down others, and his universal charity was extended equally to the humble and the proud. It bore itself to the victims with a greater solicitude, but the executioners themselves seemed to him too wretched to be worthy of hate. He wished them no harm, and merely pitied them that they were wicked.

He had no belief that reprisals, whether spontaneous, or according to law, did anything but add ill

to ill. He viewed with complacence neither the vengeance that is private and much to the point, nor the majestic cruelty of the law, and if he happened to smile when the police were being drubbed, it was simply the result of his being but flesh and blood, and naturally a good fellow.

He had, in fact, formed a very simple and sensible notion of evil. He ascribed it altogether to man's functions and natural feelings, without mixing up with it all the prejudices that take on an artificial consistency in the codes. I have said that he formed no system, being little inclined to resolve his difficulties by sophistry. It is evident that, at the outset, a difficulty stopped him short in his meditations on the means of establishing happiness or even peace on earth. He was convinced that man is by nature a vicious animal, and that communities are not abominable simply because he uses all his wits to shape them. Consequently he looked for no benefit from a return to nature. I doubt if he would have changed his opinion if he had lived to read *Emile*. When he died, Jean-Jacques had not yet stirred the world by eloquence of the sincerest feeling joined to logic of the falsest. He was still but a little vagabond, and unhappily for him, found other Abbés than Monsieur Jérôme Coignard on the benches of

Lyons' deserted walks. We may regret that Monsieur Coignard, who knew all sorts of people, never met by chance Madame de Warrens' young friend. But it could only have been an amusing incident, a romantic scene. Jean-Jacques would not have found the wisdom of our disillusioned philosopher much to his taste. Nothing could be less like the philosophy of Rousseau than that of Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard. The latter is marked with a kindly irony. It is easy and indulgent. Founded on human infirmity it is solid at bottom. The other is lacking in its gay scepticism and fleeting smile.

Taking its seat on imaginary base, that of the original virtue of our kind, it finds itself in an awkward position, the comicality of which is not quite evident to itself. It is the doctrine for men who have never laughed. Its embarrassment is seen in its bad humour. It is ungracious. There would be nothing in that but it reinstals man among the monkeys, and then gets unreasonably angry when the monkey is not virtuous. In which it is absurd and cruel. This was well exemplified when statesmen wished to apply the teachings of the *Contrat Social* to the best of Republics.

Robespierre venerated the memory of Rousseau. He would have held Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard

for a bad man. I would not make the remark if Robespierre had been a monster. But, for the learned, there are no monsters. Robespierre was an optimist, who believed in good. Statesmen of this turn do all the evil possible. If one meddles in the government of mankind one must never lose sight of the fact that they are monkeys, and mischievous. Only thus can you have a humane and kindly polity. The folly of the Revolution was to wish to establish virtue on earth. When one would make men good and wise, free, moderate, and liberal, one is led to the fatal desire of killing them all. Robespierre believed in virtue and he brought about the Terror. Marat believed in justice; he demanded two hundred thousand heads. Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard is perhaps, of all the minds of the eighteenth century, the one whose principles were most opposed to the principles of the Revolution. He would not have signed a line of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, because of the excessive and unfair separation it establishes between man and the gorilla.

Last week I had a visit from an anarchist-comrade who honours me with his friendship, and whom I like, because having taken no part as yet in the government of his country, he has kept much of his

innocence. He wants to blow up everything merely because he believes men to be naturally good and virtuous. He thinks that, deprived of their goods, and delivered from laws, they would shed their egoism and wickedness. The tenderest optimism has led him to the most savage ferocity. His only misfortune and his only crime, is that he has brought an elysian soul, made for the golden age, into the business of a cook, to which he is condemned. He is a Jean-Jacques, very simple, and very honest, who has never let himself be worried by the sight of a Madame d'Houdetot, nor softened by the refined generosity of a Maréchal de Luxembourg. His candour leaves him at the mercy of his logic, and renders him terrible. He reasons better than a minister, but he starts from an absurd principle. He does not believe in original sin, and yet, for all that, it is a dogma of such solid and stable truth that we have been able to build on it everything we have chosen to.

Why were you not with him in my study, Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, to make him feel the falsity of his doctrine? You would not have talked to this generous Utopian of the benefits of civilization and of state interests. You knew these to be pleasantries, indecent to vent on the unfortunate. You

knew that public order is but public violence, and that each man can judge of the interest he has in it. But you would have drawn a true and terrible picture of that state of nature he wishes to re-establish; you would have shown him in the idyll of his dreams, an infinity of bloody and domestic tragedies, and in his too happy anarchy the beginning of a dreadful tyranny.

And that leads me to define the attitude that Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard at the *Petit Bacchus,* took in regard to governments and peoples. He respected neither the supports of society nor the vault of Empire. He held as subject to doubt and as matter for dispute the very virtue of the Holy Ampulla, then a principle in the constitution such as universal suffrage is to-day. Such a liberty which would then have scandalised every Frenchman shocks us no longer.

But it would be to misunderstand our philosopher to make excuses for the liveliness of his criticisms on the old order of things.

Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard made no great difference between governments called absolute, and those we call free, and we may well suppose that had he lived in our day he would still have kept a strong

dose of that generous discontent of which his heart was full.

Since he dealt in principles, no doubt he would have discovered the vanity of ours. I judge by a remark of his which has come down to us. "In a democracy," said Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, "a people is subjected to its own will—a very hard slavery. In fact, it has as little knowledge of its own will, and is as opposed to it, as it could be to that of a prince. For the universal will is to be seen scarcely or not at all in the individual, who nevertheless suffers the constraint of all. And universal suffrage is a hoax, like the dove that brought the Sacred Chrism in its beak. Popular government, like monarchy, rests on fiction and lives by expedient. It suffices that the fiction be accepted, and the expedient happy."

This maxim is enough to make us believe that he would have preserved in our day the proud and smiling freedom which was the ornament of his mind in the age of kings. Still, he was never a revolutionary. He had too few illusions for that, and thought that governments should not be destroyed otherwise than by the blind and inexorable forces, slow and irresistible, that carry away all things.

He held that the one people could not be governed two ways at the same time, for this reason, that, nations being indeed bodies, their functions depend on the structure of their parts, and the condition of their organs; that is to say, of the land and the people, and not of the ruling powers, who must be adjusted to a nation as a man's clothes are to his body.

"The misfortune is," added he, "that the people are suited by them like a Harlequin or a Jack-in-the-green. Their coat is ever too loose or too tight, ill-fitting, ridiculous, grubby, covered with stains, and crawling with vermin. We may mend things by shaking it out, cautiously, putting in a stitch here, and when necessary, applying the scissors there, with discretion, so as to avoid being at the expense of another equally bad, but not clinging too obstinately to the old garment when the body has changed its shape by growth."

One sees from this that Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, was a friend to order and progress, and altogether was not a bad citizen. He incited no man to revolt, and had rather that instituted things were worn and ground-down by incessant friction, than overturned and broken by any great strokes. He

was for ever pointing out to his disciples that the harshest laws grew wonderfully smoother in practice, and that the clemency of time is surer than that of man. As for seeing the sprawling Corpus of the law one day re-shaped, he neither hoped it nor wished for it; laying no store by the benefits of hasty legislation. Jacques Tournebroche asked him at times whether he were not afraid that his critical philosophy, as exercised on institutions he himself judged necessary, might not have the inopportune effect of toppling down what he would wish preserved.

"Why, oh best of masters," said his faithful disciple, "why reduce to dust the foundations of all right, of justice, and law, and generally of all civil and military rule, since you acknowledge the necessity of right, justice, armies, magistrates and drill-sergeants?"

"My son," replied Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, "I have ever remarked that men's prejudices are the source of their ills, just as spiders and scorpions issue from the gloom of cellars and the damp of back-gardens. It is just as well to pass the Turk's head or the broom at random now and then in these dark corners. It is not a bad thing even to give a

touch of the pick here and there on the walls of the cellar and garden. It scares the vermin and prepares the way for the ruin that must come."

"I agree willingly," replied the mild Tournebroche; "but when you have destroyed every principle, my master, what will be left?"

And his master replied: "After the destruction of every false principle society will still cohere, because it is founded on necessity, whose laws, older than Saturn, will still prevail when Prometheus shall have dethroned Jupiter."

Prometheus has dethroned Jupiter more than once since the time when Abbé Coignard spoke these words, and the prophecies of the sage have been so literally verified that at the present day one feels doubts, so much does the new resemble the old order, whether the power does not still rest in ancient Jove. There are those who deny the coming of the Titan. There is no sign on his breast, they say, of the wound whence the eagle, the creature of injustice, tore out his heart, the wound that should bleed for ever. He knows nothing of the griefs and insurgence of the exile. This is not the workaday divinity promised, and expected by us. This is the full-fed Jove from the hoary and laughable Olympus. When shall he appear again, the strong

friend of men, the fire-kindler, the Titan still nailed to his crag? A terrible noise from out the mountains makes known that he is lifting his lacerated shoulders from off the iniquitous rock, and we can feel, flaming on us, his distant breath.

A stranger to business, Monsieur Coignard inclined to pure speculation and dealt readily in general ideas. This disposition of his, which may have damaged him in the eyes of his contemporaries, gives his reflections some worth and usefulness after a century and a half. We can there learn to know the manners of our own day and disentangle what there is of evil in them.

Injustice, stupidity, and cruelty, do not strike us when they are the common lot. We see them in our ancestors but not in ourselves. Still, since there is no past epoch whatever, when mankind does not seem absurd to us, savage and unjust, it would be a miracle if our age had, by some privilege, cast away every shred of folly, malice, and savagery. The opinions of Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard would help us to make our examination of conscience, if we were not like those idols which have eyes and see not, and ears and hear not. With a little good faith and impartiality we should soon see that our legal codes are still but a hotbed of injustice, that

we preserve in our manners the inherited hardness of avarice and pride; that we value wealth alone, and have no respect for labour. Our system of affairs would appear to us what it really is, a wretched and precarious system, condemned by abstract justice if not by that of man, and the ruin of which is beginning. Our rich men would seem to us as foolish as cockchafers continuing to eat the leaves of a tree, while the little beetle on their body devours their entrails. No more would we be lulled to sleep by the false speeches of our statesmen; we should conceive a positive pity for our economists arguing with one another about the cost of the furniture in a burning house. Abbé Coignard's disquisitions reveal to us a prophetic disdain of the great principles of the Revolution and of the rights of the people, on which we have established these hundred years, with every kind of violence and by usurpation, an incoherant succession of insurrectionary governments, themselves, innocent of irony, condemning insurrection. If we could begin to smile a little at follies, which once appeared majestic and at times were stained with blood; if we could perceive that our modern prejudices are, like the old, the outcome of something, either ridiculous or hateful; if we could judge one another with a

charitable scepticism,* quarrels would be less sharp, in the fairest country in the world, and Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, for one, would have laboured for the universal good.

ANATOLE FRANCE

* This has been very favorably received, Monsieur Hugues Rebell having admitted that there is such a thing as a charitable scepticism. Referring, not, it is true, to the opinions of Monsieur Coignard, but to some writings drawn from the same source, he has made some remarks of which I may avail myself here:

"An interesting vein of thought might be followed up after reading this work, furnishing, as it does, some valuable teaching: I may be permitted some reflections on it:

"1. The organisation of a particular society does not depend on individual wills, but on the compulsion of nature, or to put it more simply, on the unanimity of the more intelligent beings of which that society is composed who inevitably choose the most agreeable rule of life:

"2. Mankind at any one period, having the same organic constitution and passions as mankind at any other period, can never have entirely differing institutions. It results from this that a political revolution is no more than a rotatory movement, round the ancient ways, which ends where it began; it is just a disease, an interruption in human development. And the result of this law is that all societies live and die in the same way."

HUGUES REBELL in *l'Ermitage, April* 1893.

Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard simply says that a people is not susceptible to more than one form of government at the same period.

THE OPINIONS OF JÉRÔME COIGNARD

COLLECTED BY

JACQUES TOURNEBROCHE

AND PUBLISHED BY

ANATOLE FRANCE

THE OPINIONS OF JÉRÔME COIGNARD

I

MINISTERS OF STATE

HIS afternoon, Abbé Jérôme Coignard visited, as he was in the habit of doing, Monsieur Blaizot, the bookseller in the Rue Saint-Jacques, at the sign of the *Image de Sainte Catherine.*

Perceiving the works of Jean Racine on the shelves he set about carelessly turning over the leaves of one of the volumes.

"This poet," he informed us, "was not lacking in genius, and had he but risen to the writing of his tragedies in Latin verse he would be worthy of praise, more especially in the case of his *Athalie,* where he shows that he understood politics well enough. In comparison with him Corneille is but an empty ranter. This tragedy of the accession of Joas shows us some of the forces whose play raises

empires or casts them down. And one must perforce believe that Monsieur Racine possessed that spirit of finesse which we should hold of more account than all the sublimities of poetry and eloquence, which in reality are but rhetorical tricks serving for the amusement of the vulgar. To raise mankind to the sublime belongs to an inferior order of mind self-deceived on the true nature of Adam's race, which is altogether wretched and deserving of pity. I refrain from calling man a ridiculous animal for the sole consideration that Jesus Christ ransomed him with His precious blood. The nobility of mankind is based only upon this inconceivable mystery, and of themselves human beings, be they mean or great, are but savage and disgusting beasts."

Just as my good master pronounced these final words Monsieur Roman came into the shop.

"Stop! Monsieur l'Abbé," exclaimed this able man. "You forget that those disgusting and ferocious beasts are, in Europe at any rate, subjected to an admirable government, and that states, such as the kingdom of France, and the Dutch Republic, are far removed from the barbarous and rude conditions which offend you."

My good master replaced the volume of Racine

on the shelf, and replied to Monsieur Roman with his customary grace:

"I grant you, Monsieur, that the writings of the philosophers, who treat of these subjects, the doings of public men take on a certain symmetry and perspicuousness, and in your treatise on *Monarchy* I admire the sequence and connection of ideas. But it is to you alone that I do honour for the fine sentiments that you attribute to the great politicians of times past and present. They had not the wit you endow them with, and these illustrious beings, who appear to have led the world, were themselves but the plaything of nature and chance. They did not rise above human imbecility, and were in fact but brilliant nobodies."

While listening impatiently to this speech Monsieur Roman had seized hold of an old atlas. He began to turn it about with a noise which mingled with the sound of his voice.

"What blindness!" said he. "What! to fail to understand the actions of great statesmen, of great citizens! Are you so ignorant of history that it does not appear obvious to you that a Cæsar, a Richelieu, a Cromwell, moulded his people as a potter his clay? Do you not see that a state goes like a watch in the hands of a watch-maker?"

"I do not see it," replied my good master, "and during the fifty years of my life I have noticed that this country has changed its form of government several times without changing the condition of the people, excepting for an insensible progress that does not depend on the human will. From which I conclude that it is well-nigh immaterial whether we be governed one way or another, and that statesmen are only noteworthy by reason of their coats and their coaches."

"Can you talk like this," replied Monsieur Roman, "on the day following the death of a statesman who took such a prominent part in affairs, and who, after long disgrace, dies at the moment he has regained power and honour? By the tumult round his bier you may judge the result of his work. This result lasts after him."

"Monsieur," answered my good master, "this statesman was an honest man, laborious and painstaking, and it might be said of him as of Monsieur Vauban, that he was too well-bred to affect the appearance of it, for he never took pains to please any one. I would praise him before all, for having improved where others in the same business do but deteriorate. He possessed his soul and had a glowing sense of the greatness of his country. He was

praiseworthy also, in that he carried easily on those broad shoulders the spites of hucksters and rufflers. Even his enemies accord him a concealed approval. But what big things did he ever do, my good sir, and why does he seem to you anything but the sport of the winds which blew round him? The Jesuits whom he drove away, have come back; the little religious war he kindled to amuse the people has gone out, leaving next day but the stinking shell of a bad firework. I grant you he was clever in diverting opinion, or rather, in deflecting it. His party, which was but a party of opportunism and expediency, did not wait for his death to change its name and its chief without changing its doctrine. His cabal remained faithful to its chief and to itself in continuing to submit to circumstances. Is there anything astonishingly great about that?"

"There is certainly something admirable," replied Monsieur Roman. "Had he only withdrawn the art of government from the clouds of metaphysics to lead it back to reality, he should have all my praise. His party, you say, was one of opportunism and expediency. But to excel in human affairs what needs one but to seize the happy moment and have recourse to utilitarian methods? This is what he did, or, at least, this is what he

would have done, if the chicken-hearted instability of his friends and the false effrontery of his foes had left him any peace. But he wore himself out in the vain endeavour to placate the latter and steady the former. Time and men, those necessary tools, both were wanting to establish his beneficent rule. At least he framed admirable plans for home politics. And you ought not to forget that he endowed his country with vast and fertile possessions abroad. We owe him all the more gratitude in that he made these successful conquests alone and in spite of the parliament from which he drew his powers."

"Monsieur," answered my good master, "he showed energy and skill in colonial affairs, but not perhaps much more than a plain man displays in buying a piece of land. And what is not to my taste in all these over-sea affairs is the way the Europeans deal with the peoples of Africa and America. White men, when they come to grips with black and yellow races find themselves forced to exterminate them. One can only conquer the savage by a higher form of barbarity. Here is the extreme to which all foreign enterprises tend. I am not denying that the Spaniards, the Dutch, and the English have drawn profit from them. But, ordinarily speaking, they launch themselves haphazard, and

quite recklessly on these big and cruel undertakings.

"What is the wisdom and the will of one man in enterprises affecting commerce, agriculture, and navigation, which necessarily depend on an immense number of units? The part played by a statesman in such affairs is a very small one, and if it seems marked to us it is because our minds, turning to mythology, too willingly give a name and a personality to all the secret workings of nature.

"What did he discover in the matter of colonisation that was not already known to the Phœnicians in the time of Cadmus?"

At these words Monsieur Roman let fall his atlas, which the bookseller quietly picked up.

"I discover to my sorrow, Monsieur l'Abbé," said he, "that you are a sophist. For that he must be who can thus smother the colonial enterprises of the dead and gone minister with Cadmus and the Phœnicians. You are unable to deny that these undertakings were his work and you have made this pitiable introduction of Cadmus to set us at loggerheads."

"Monsieur," said the Abbé, "let us leave Cadmus alone if he annoys you. I merely wish to say that a statesman plays but a small part in his own works, and he deserves neither the glory nor the shame of

them. I mean to say that, if, in this wretched comedy of life, princes appear to rule and people to obey, it is but a game, an empty show; and that really they are, both one and the other, directed by an unseen force."

II

SAINT ABRAHAM

NE summer night, while the gnats danced round the lamp of the *Petit Bacchus,* Abbé Coignard was taking the air in the porch of St. Benoît-le-Bétourné. There he was meditating, as his habit was, when Catherine came up and seated herself by him on the stone bench. My good master was ever inclined to praise God in his works. He took pleasure in the contemplation of this handsome girl, and as he had an agreeable and graceful wit he held her in pleasant talk. He paid tribute not only to the charm of her tongue, but to that of her neck and the rest of her person, and to the fact that she smiled no less with all the dimplement and lines of her pretty body than with lips and cheeks; in such sort that one submitted with impatience to drapery disguising the rest of the smile.

"Since we must needs all sin in this world and no one, without pride, may believe himself infallible, it is when with you, Mademoiselle, by preference, if

such were your pleasure, that I would the Divine Grace failed me. I should gain thereby two valuable advantages, to wit: firstly, to sin with rare delight and unusual pleasure; secondly, to find thereafter an excuse in the strength of your fascination; for it is doubtless written in the Judgment Books that your charms are irresistible. That should be taken into consideration. There are imprudent people who sin with women ugly and ill-made. These unhappy mortals, setting about it in this way, run great risk of the loss of their souls, for they sin for sinning's sake, and their onerous ill-doing is full of evil intent. Whereas, so fair a skin as yours, Catherine, is an excuse in the eyes of the Almighty. Your charms wonderfully alleviate the fault, which becomes pardonable, being involuntary. In fact, to tell you the plain truth, Mademoiselle, when I am near you Divine Grace abandons me at one stroke of the wing. At this moment that I am talking to you, it is but as a little white spot above those roofs where, on the tiles, the cats make love with mad cries and childish lamentation, the while the moon is perched unblushingly on a chimney-pot. What I see of your person, Catherine, appeals to me; but what I do not see appeals to me still more."

At these words she lowered her gaze on her lap;

then turned its liquid appeal on the Abbé. And in a very sweet voice she said:

"As you wish me well, Monsieur Jérôme, do promise to grant me the favour I am going to ask you, and for which I shall be so grateful."

My good master promised. Who would not have done as much in his place?

Catherine then said vivaciously:

"You know, Monsieur l'Abbé, that Abbé La Perruque, the *vicaire* of St. Benoît, accuses brother Ange of having stolen his donkey, and he has carried his complaint to the ecclesiastical court. Now, nothing could be more untrue. The good brother had borrowed the donkey to take some relics to various villages. The donkey was lost on the way. The relics were found. That is the essential point, says brother Ange. But Abbé La Perruque reclaims his donkey, and won't listen to anything else. He is going to put the little brother in the Archbishop's prison. You alone can soften his anger and induce him to withdraw his complaint."

"But, Mademoiselle," said Abbé Coignard, "I have neither the power nor the inclination to do so."

"Oh!" resumed Catherine, sliding near to him and looking at him with a great pretence of tender-

ness, "I shall be very unhappy if I cannot succeed in giving you the inclination. Whilst as to the power, you have it, Monsieur Jérôme; you have it! And nothing would be easier for you than to save the little brother. You have only to give Monsieur La Perruque eight sermons for Lent and four for Advent. You write sermons so well that it must be a real pleasure to you to write them. Compose these twelve sermons, Monsieur Jérôme; compose them at once. I will come and fetch them myself from your stall at the Innocents. Monsieur La Perruque, who thinks a great deal of your worth and your knowledge, reckons that twelve of your sermons are as good as a donkey. As soon as he has the dozen he will withdraw his complaint. He has said so. What are twelve sermons, Monsieur Jérôme? I promise to write Amen at the foot of the last one. I have your promise?" she added, putting her arms round his neck.

"As for that," Monsieur Coignard said roughly, disengaging the pretty hands clasped on his shoulder, "I refuse flatly. Promises made to pretty girls are but skin deep, and it is no sin to retract them. Don't count on me, my beauty, to drag your bearded gallant from the hands of the ecclesiastical court! Should I write a sermon, or two, or twelve, they

would be directed against the bad monks who are the shame of the Church, and are as vermin clinging to the robe of St. Peter. This brother Ange is a rascal. He gives good women to touch, as relics, some old mutton or pork bone which he has gnawed himself with disgusting greediness. I wager he bore on Monsieur La Perruque's donkey a feather of the Angel Gabriel, a ray from the wise men's star, and in a little phial a trifle of the sound of the bells that rang in the belfry of Solomon's temple. He is a dunce, he is a liar, and you love him. There are three reasons why I should dislike him. I leave you to judge, Mademoiselle, which of the three is the strongest. Perchance it may well be the least honest; for in truth I was, a moment ago, drawn to you with a violence neither befitting my age nor my condition. But make no mistake; I resent extremely the insults offered by your cowled rascal to the Church of our Saviour Jesus Christ, of which I am a very unworthy member. And this capuchin's example fills me with such disgust that I am possessed by a sudden longing to meditate on some beautiful passage of St. John Chrysostom, instead of sitting knee to knee with you, Mademoiselle, as I have been doing for the last quarter of an hour. For the desire of the sinner

is short-lived and the glory of God is everlasting. I have never held an exaggerated notion of sins of the flesh. I think in justice to me that must be allowed.

"I am not scared like Monsieur Nicodème, for example, at such a little thing as taking one's pleasure with a pretty girl. But what I cannot endure is the baseness of soul, the hypocrisy, the lies, and the crass ignorance, which make your brother Ange an accomplished monk. From your intercourse with him, Mademoiselle, you get a habit of crapulence which drags you much below your position, which is that of a courtesan. I know the shame and the misery of it; but it is a far superior state to that of a monk. This rascal dishonours you even as he dishonours the gutters of the Rue St. Jacques by dipping his feet into them. Think of all the virtues with which you might adorn yourself, Mademoiselle, in your precarious walk of life, and one alone of which might one day open paradise to you, if you were not subjugated and enslaved to this unclean beast.

"Even while permitting yourself to pick up here and there what must, after all, be bestowed on you as tokens of gratitude, you, Catherine, could blossom forth in faith, hope, and charity, love the

poverty-stricken, and visit the sick. You could be charitable and compassionate; and find pure delight in the sight of the skies, the waters, the woods, and the fields. Of a morning, on opening your window, you could praise God while listening to the song of the birds. On days of pilgrimage you might climb the hill of St. Valérien, and there, beneath the Calvary, softly bewail your lost innocence. You could act in such a way that He who alone reads our hearts would say: 'Catherine is my creature, and I know her by the glimmerings of a clear light not altogether extinguished in her.'"

Catherine interrupted him:

"But Abbé," she said drily, "you are spinning me a sermon."

"Did you not ask me for a dozen?" he replied.

She began to be angry:

"Take care Abbé. It rests with you if we are to be friends or enemies. Will you compose the twelve sermons? Think well before you answer."

"Mademoiselle," said Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, "I have done blameworthy things in my life, but not after reflection."

"You will not? Quite certain? One—two—You refuse? Abbé, I shall take my revenge."

For some time she sulked, mute and bad-tempered,

on the bench. Then all at once she started crying:

"Have done, Monsieur l'Abbé! Have done! At your age, and a man of your cloth to plague me thus! Fie Monsieur l'Abbé! Fie! How shameful, Monsieur l'Abbé!"

As she was squealing at her shrillest, the Abbé saw Mademoiselle Lecoeur, of the draper's shop at the sign of the *Trois Pucelles,* pass through the porch. She was going thus late to confess to the third *vicaire* of St. Benoît, and turned away her head in sign of her huge disgust.

He owned himself that Catherine's revenge was prompt and sure, for Mademoiselle Lecoeur's sense of virtue, fortified by age, had become so vigorous, that she was down upon every impropriety of the parish, and seven times a day stabbed with the point of her tongue the carnal sinners of the Rue St. Jacques.

But Catherine herself did not know how complete was her revenge. She had seen Mademoiselle Lecoeur come into the market-place, but she had not seen my father who was following closely.

He was coming with me to look for the Abbé in the porch, and take him to the *Petit Bacchus.* My father had a liking for Catherine. Nothing vexed him more than to see her close beset by gallants.

He had no illusions about her conduct. But as he said, knowing and seeing are two different things. Now Catherine's cries had reached his ears quite clearly. He was hasty and incapable of self-restraint. I was much afraid that his wrath would burst forth in coarse suggestion or savage threats. I already saw him drawing his larding-pin, which he wore on his apron-string like an honourable weapon, for he gloried in his art and in his spit.

My fears were but half-justified. The occasion surprised him, but not unpleasantly, when Catherine showed virtue, and satisfaction overcame anger in his mind.

He accosted my good master fairly civilly and said with mock severity:

"Monsieur Coignard, all priests who cultivate the society of courtesans lose thereby their virtue and their good name. And rightly so, even if no pleasure has rewarded their dishonour."

Catherine left the spot with a fine air of offended modesty, and my excellent master answered my father with a sweet and smiling eloquence:

"That maxim is excellent, Monsieur Léonard; still one should not apply it without discretion, nor stick it on to everything as the lame cutler labels all his knives 'sixpence.' I will not inquire why I

merited its application a moment ago. Will it not do if I own that I merited it?

"It is not seemly to talk of oneself and it would be too great a shock to my modesty to be obliged to discourse on what is personal to me. I would rather set up the case of the venerable Robert d'Arbrissel who acquired merit from frequenting courtesans. One might also quote St. Abraham, the anchorite of Syria, who did not fear to enter a house of ill-fame."

"What St. Abraham was that?" asked my father, whose thoughts were all put to rout.

"Let us sit down outside your door," said my good master, "bring a jug of wine, and I will tell you the story of this great saint as it was recorded for us by St. Ephraim himself."

My father made a gesture of ready assent. We all three sat down under the eaves, and my good master spoke as follows:

"St. Abraham, being already old, lived alone in the desert in a little hut, when his brother died leaving a daughter of great beauty, named Mary. Assured that the life he led would be excellent for his niece, Abraham had built for her a little cell near his own, whence he taught her by means of a small window that he had had pierced.

"He took care that she fasted, watched, and sang psalms. But a monk, whom we may suppose to have been a false monk, drew nigh Mary while the holy man Abraham was meditating on the Scriptures, and led the young girl into sin; who thus said to herself:

" 'It were far better, since I am dead to God, to go into a country where I am known to none.'

"Leaving her cell she betook herself to a neighbouring town called Edessa, where there were delightful gardens and cool fountains; it is still to this day the pleasantest of the towns of Syria. Meanwhile, the holy man Abraham remained plunged in profound meditation. His niece had already been gone some days when, opening her little window, he asked:

" 'Mary, why do you no longer sing the psalms you sang so well?' And receiving no reply he suspected the truth and cried: 'A cruel wolf has carried off my ewe lamb from me!'

"He lived in sorrow for two years, after which he learnt that his niece was leading a bad life. Acting with discretion, he begged one of his friends to go to the town and find out what had become of her. The friend's report was, that, in very deed, Mary was leading a bad life. At this news the holy man

begged his friend to lend him a riding-dress and bring him a horse, and putting on his head a big hat which hid his face, so as not to be recognised, he presented himself at the hostelry where they had told him his niece was lodged. He looked on all sides to see if he could not see her, but, as she did not appear, he said to the innkeeper, feigning to smile:

" 'Mine host, they tell me you have a pretty girl here. Can I not see her?'

"The innkeeper, an obliging man, had her called and Mary appeared in a costume, which, according to the words of St. Ephraim himself, sufficed to reveal her mode of life. The holy man was pierced with sorrow.

"He affected gaiety nevertheless, and ordered a good meal. Mary was in a sober mood that day. In giving pleasure one does not always taste it, and the sight of this old man whom she did not recognise, for he had not removed his hat, in no way inclined her to joyousness. The innkeeper cried shame upon her for such naughty behaviour so opposed to the duties of her profession, but she said with a sigh: 'Would to God that I had died three years ago!'

"The holy man Abraham was careful to adopt

the language, as he had taken the coat, of a gallant cavalier:

" 'My child,' said he, 'I have come here not to bewail your sins but to partake of your affection.'

"But when the innkeeper left him alone with Mary he feigned no more, but raising his hat, he said weeping:

" 'Mary, my child, do you not know me? Am I not that Abraham who has been a father to you?'

"He took her by the hand and all the night long he exhorted her to repentance and penance. Above all he was careful not to drive her to despair. He repeated incessantly 'My child, it is only God who is without sin.'

"Mary was naturally a sweet soul. She consented to go back to him. At daybreak they set out. She would have taken her robes and jewels. But the holy man made her understand that it would be more fitting to leave them. He mounted her on his horse and led her back to their cells, where they both took up their past life. Only this time the good man took care that Mary's room did not communicate with the outside world, and that there was no going out without passing through the room that he himself occupied. By which means and by the grace of God, he kept his ewe lamb. Such is the

history of St. Abraham," said my good master, drinking his cup of wine.

"It is quite beautiful," said my father, "and the misfortunes of poor Mary have brought tears to my eyes."

III

MINISTERS OF STATE (*concluded*)

HAT same day my good master and I were exceedingly surprised to meet at Monsieur Blaizot's at the sign of the *Image de Sainte Catherine,* a little thin, yellow man, who was no other than the celebrated pamphleteer, Jean Hibou. . . . We had every reason to believe that he was in the Bastille, where he usually was. And if we had no hesitation in recognising him it was because his face still showed traces of the darkness and mildew of the dungeon. He was turning over with a trembling hand, under the bookseller's anxious eye, some political writings newly come from Holland. Abbé Jérôme Coignard doffed his hat with a natural grace which would have been more effective if the hat had not been staved in the night before in a scuffle, that need not concern us, in the arbour at the *Petit Bacchus.*

Abbé Coignard having shown his pleasure at meeting so able a man again, Monsieur Jean Hibou replied: "It will not be for long. I am leaving this

country where I am unable to live. I cannot breathe the corrupted air of this town any longer. In a month's time I shall be settled in Holland. It is cruel to have to put up with Fleury after Dubois, and I am too virtuous to be a Frenchman. We are governed on bad principles, by fools and rogues. I cannot endure it."

"Truly," said my excellent master, "public affairs are badly managed and there are many thieves in office. Power is divided between fools and knaves and should I ever write on the affairs of the day I should make a small book on the lines of the *Apokolokyntosis* of Seneca the Philosopher, or of our own *Satire Ménippée,* which is fairly pungent. This light and pleasant style suits the subject better than the morose stiltedness of a Tacitus or the patient seriousness of a de Thou. I would make copies of this lampoon which would be passed about under the rose, and it should display a philosophical disdain for mankind. The majority of the people in office would be extremely annoyed, but I think some would taste a secret pleasure in seeing themselves covered with shame. I judge so from what I heard said by a lady of good birth whose acquaintance I made at Séez during the time when I was the Bishop's librarian. She was growing old, but still

thrilled to lascivious memories. For I must tell you that for twenty years she had been the most notorious trollop in Normandy. And when I asked her what had given her the most lively pleasure in life, she answered me: 'To know myself dishonoured.'

"From this reply I gathered that she had some nicety of feeling. I would give as much credit to certain of our ministers, and if ever I write against them it would be to incite them to hug their infamy and viciousness.

"But why postpone the execution of so fine a project? I will ask Monsieur Blaizot at once for half a dozen sheets of paper and set about writing the first chapter of the new *Ménippée*."

He was already reaching out his hand to the astonished Monsieur Blaizot, when Monsieur Jean Hibou stopped him quickly:

"Keep this splendid scheme for Holland, Monsieur l'Abbé," he said, "and come with me to Amsterdam, where I will provide you with the means of livelihood at some coffee-house or bagnio. There you will be free, and of nights you shall write your *Ménippée* at one end of the table, whilst I, at the other, am busy with my lampoons. They shall be full charged with virus, and who

knows but what we may bring about a change in the affairs of the kingdom? Pamphleteers play more part than is thought in the downfall of empires. They prepare the catastrophe which is consummated by a popular revolt.

"What a triumph," he added, in a voice which whistled through his blackened teeth, carious with the bitter humours of his mouth, "what joy if I effected the destruction of one of those ministers, who, like cowards, shut me in the Bastille! Will you not take a share in such good work, Monsieur l'Abbé?"

"By no means," replied my good master, "I should be very sorry to change anything in the system of the State, and if I thought that my *Apokolokyntosis* or *Ménippée* could have such a result, I would never write it."

"What!" exclaimed the disappointed pamphleteer, "didn't you tell me but a moment ago, that the present government was wicked?"

"No doubt," said Monsieur l'Abbé, "but I merely imitate the wisdom of that old crone of Syracuse who, at the time when Dionysius treated his people most execrably, went to the temple every day to pray to the gods for the life of the tyrant. Told of this singular piety, Dionysius wished to know the

reason for it. He sent for the good woman, and questioned her:

"She replied, 'I am no longer young and have lived under many tyrants, and I have always observed that a bad one was succeeded by a worse. You are the most detestable that I have yet seen. From which I conclude that your successor will be, if possible, more wicked than yourself, and I pray the gods to give him to us as late as may be.'

"That old woman was very sensible, and I think as she did, Monsieur Jean Hibou, that sheep do well to allow themselves to be sheared by their old shepherd, for fear a younger one should come along, who would but shear them closer."

Monsieur Jean Hibou's gall, stirred by this discourse, spent itself in bitter words:

"What cowardly talk! What shameful sentiments! Oh! Monsieur l'Abbé, what little love you bear to the public good, and how ill you deserve the oak-leaf crown promised by the poets to civic heroes. You should have been born amongst the Turks, amongst the Tartars, slave to a Genghis Khan or a Bajazet, rather than in Europe where principles of public right are taught, and divine philosophy. What! you endure bad government nor even wish to alter it! Such sentiments would

be punished in a republic of my making by exile or banishment at least. Yes, Monsieur l'Abbé, in the constitution that I meditate, which is to be formulated on the maxims of antiquity, I shall add a clause for the punishment of such bad citizens as you, and I shall proclaim penalties against whomsoever can improve his State but does not do so."

"Eh! eh!" laughed the Abbé, "that is not the way to make me wish to live in your Salentum. What you have let me know of it leads me to think that there would be much constraint there."

Monsieur Jean Hibou replied sententiously: "You would only be constrained to be virtuous."

"Ah, how right that old woman was, and what reason we have to fear a Jean Hibou after a Dubois and a Fleury! What you offer me, my good sir, is a government of violence and hypocrisy, and to hasten this promised good you undertake to make me a keeper of a coffee-house or a bagnio on a canal in Amsterdam! Thank you for nothing! I stick to the Rue St. Jacques, where we drink cool claret and grumble at the ministers. Do you think you can seduce me by the vision of a government of honest men that so hedges in all liberties that no one can enjoy them?"

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said Jean Hibou, getting heated, "is it fair to attack a system of State conceived by me in the Bastille, and undisclosed to you?"

"Sir," retorted my excellent master, "I am suspicious of governments born of cabals and rebellions. To be in opposition is a very bad school of government, and wary politicians, who push themselves into office by this means, take great care to govern by rules entirely opposed to those they formerly taught. You need not go to China to see that! They are guided by the same necessities which lay on their predecessors. And they bring nothing new to the task but their inexperience. Which is one reason, sir, which makes me foretell that a new government would be more vexatious than the one it replaces, without being very different. Have we not already put it to the proof?"

"So," said Monsieur Jean Hibou, "you hold by abuses?"

"Such is the case," answered my good master. "Governments are like wines that grow crusted and mellow with age. The roughest lose at length something of their crudity. I fear an empire in the greenness of its youth. I fear the rawness of a republic, and since we must be ill-governed I prefer

princes and statesmen in whom the first ardour has cooled off."

Monsieur Jean Hibou, crushing his hat on his nose, bade us good-bye with irritation in his voice.

As soon as he was gone Monsieur Blaizot looked up over his ledgers, and settling his spectacles, said to my excellent master:

"I have been a bookseller for forty years at the sign of the *Image de Sainte Catherine,* and it is always a fresh pleasure to me to listen to the converse of the learned men who meet in my shop. But I do not greatly care for discussions on public affairs. People get heated, and quarrel to no purpose."

"Moreover," said my good master, "in this subject there is little solid principle."

"There is, at least, one that no man will do well to contest," replied Monsieur Blaizot the bookseller, "and that is that he must be a bad Christian and a bad Frenchman who would deny the virtue of the holy Ampulla of Rheims, by whose unction our kings are made vicars of Jesus Christ for the kingdom of France. Here is the basis of monarchy, which shall never be shaken."

IV

THE AFFAIR OF THE MISSISSIPPI

IT is well known that during the year 1722 the parliament of Paris sat in judgment on the Mississippi affair, in which were implicated, along with the directors of the Company, a minister of State, secretary to the King, and many sub-inspectors of provinces. The Company was accused of having corrupted the officers of the King and his dominions, who had in reality stripped it with the greed usual to people in office under weak governments. And it is certain that at this period all the springs of government were slackened and warped.

At one of the sittings of this memorable action, Madame de la Morangère, wife of one of the directors of the Mississippi Company was called before the members of Parliament in the upper chamber. She gave evidence that a Monsieur Lescot, secretary to the *Lieutenant-Criminel,* * having sent

* A stipendiary magistrate.

for her to come in secret to the Châtelet, made her understand that it lay with her entirely to save her husband, who was a fine man and of comely aspect. He said to her, nearly in these terms: "Madame, what vexes the true friends of the King in this business is that the Jansenists are not implicated in it. Jansenists are enemies to the Crown as well as to religion. Help us, Madame, to convict one of them and we will acknowledge the service to the State by giving you back your husband with all his possessions."

When Madame de la Morangère had reported this conversation, which was not intended for the public, the President of the Parliament was obliged to call Monsieur Lescot to the upper chamber, who at first tried to deny it. But Madame de la Morangère had beautiful ingenuous eyes, whose gaze he could not meet. He grew troubled and was confounded. He was a big, villainous-looking, red-haired man like Judas Iscariot. This affair, noticed by the Press, became the talk of Paris. It was spoken of in the salons, on the public walks, at the barbers', and in the coffee-houses. Everywhere Madame de la Morangère gained as much sympathy as Lescot caused disgust.

Public curiosity was still rife when I accompanied

my good master Monsieur Jérôme Coignard to Monsieur Blaizot's, who, as you know, is a bookseller in the Rue St. Jacques, at the sign of the *Image de Sainte Catherine.* In the shop we found Monsieur Gentil, private secretary to one of the ministers of State, whose face was hidden in a book newly come from Holland, and the celebrated Monsieur Roman, who has treated of systems of State in various estimable works. Old Monsieur Blaizot was reading his paper behind the counter.

Monsieur Jérôme Coignard, always avid of news, slid up to him to glean what he could across his shoulder. This man, learned and of so rare a genius, owned nothing of the goods of this world, and when he had drunk his pint at the *Petit Bacchus* he had not a halfpenny left in his pockets to buy a news-sheet. Having read the depositions of Madame de la Morangère over Monsieur Blaizot's shoulder, he cried out that it was well, and that it pleased him to see wickedness topple from its high seat under the weak hand of woman, as in wonderful examples witnessed to in Holy Writ.

"This lady," he added, "although allied with public men of whom I do not approve, may be likened unto those strong women lauded in the Book of Kings. She pleases by an uncommon mix-

ture of straightforwardness and finesse, and I applaud her telling victory."

Monsieur Roman interrupted him:

"Take care, Monsieur l'Abbé," said he, stretching out his arm, "take care how you look at this affair from an individual and personal point of view, without troubling yourself as you should do with the public interests that are bound up in it. There are reasons of State in all this, and it is clear that this supreme reason demanded that Madame de la Morangère should not speak, or that her words should not find credence."

Monsieur Gentil lifted his nose from his book.

"The importance of this incident," said he, "has been much exaggerated."

"Ah, Mr. Secretary," retorted Monsieur Roman, "we cannot believe that an incident that will lose you your place can be without importance. For you will fall by it, sir, you and your master. For my part, I am full of regrets. But what consoles me for the fall of the Ministry now reeling under the shock is that they were powerless to prevent it."

Monsieur Gentil made us understand by a slight wink that on this point he saw eye to eye with Monsieur Roman.

The latter continued:

"The State is like the human body—all the functions it accomplishes are not noble. Some there are indeed that one must needs hide, I may say the most necessary."

"Ah, Monsieur," said the Abbé, "was it then necessary that Monsieur Lescot should so behave to the unfortunate wife of a prisoner? It was infamous!"

"Oh," said Monsieur Roman, "it was infamous when it was known. Before, it was of no importance. If you wish to enjoy the benefit of being governed, which alone raises mankind above the animals, you must leave, to those who govern, the means of exercising power, and the first of these means is secrecy. That is why popular government, which is the least secret of all, is also the weakest. Do you then think, Monsieur l'Abbé, that you can govern men by virtue? That is a wild dream!"

"I do not think so," replied my good master, "I have noticed in the varied chances of my life that men are evil beasts; one can only control them by force and cunning. But one must be measured and not offend the small amount of good tendencies which mingles with the evil instincts in their minds. For after all, Monsieur, man, all cowardly, stupid, cruel, as he is was made in God's image, and there

remain to him still certain features of his primal shape. A government drawn from the common stock of average honesty, and that yet scandalises the people, should be deposed."

"Speak lower, Monsieur l'Abbé," said the secretary.

"The King can do no wrong," said Monsieur Roman, "and your maxims are seditious, Monsieur l'Abbé. You deserve, you and your like, not to be governed at all."

"Oh!" said my good master, "if, as you give us to understand, government consists in swindling, violence, and exactions of all kinds, there is not much fear that this threat will take effect, ad we shall find, for long enough yet, ministers of State and governors of provinces to carry on our affairs. Only I should much like to see others in place of these. The new-comers could not be worse than the old, and who knows but that they may be even slightly better?"

"Take care!" said Monsieur Roman, "take care! What is admirable in a state, is succession and continuity, and if there is no perfect state in this world, it is because, according to my idea, the flood in the time of Noah disordered the transmission of crowns.

It is a confusion we have not quite set straight to this day."

"Monsieur," retorted my good master, "you are amusing with your theories. The history of the world is full of revolutions. One sees but civil wars, tumults, and seditions, caused by the wickedness of princes, and I know not which to admire the most nowadays, the impudence of the rulers, or the patience of the people."

The secretary complained then that Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard overlooked the benefits of royalty, and Monsieur Blaizot represented to us that it was not fitting to contend about public matters in a bookseller's shop.

When we were outside, I pulled my good master by the sleeve.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," I said, "have you then forgotten the old woman of Syracuse, that you now want to change the tyrant?"

"Tournebroche, my son," answered he, "I acknowledge with a good grace that I have fallen into a contradiction. But this ambiguity, that you justly point out in my words, is not as evil as that called antinomy by the philosophers. Charron, in his book on 'Wisdom,' affirms that antinomies exist

which cannot be resolved. For my part, I am no sooner plunged in meditations of the kind than I see in my mind's eye half a dozen of these she-devils take each other by the nose and make pretence to tear each other's eyes out, and one sees at once that one would never come to the end of reconciling these obstinate shrews. I lose all hope of making them agree, and it is their fault if I have not much advanced metaphysics. But in the present case the contradiction, my son, is merely apparent. My reason always sides with the old woman of Syracuse. I think to-day what I thought yesterday. Only I have let my feelings run away with me and have yielded to passion as do the vulgar."

V

EASTER EGGS

MY father kept a cook-shop in the Rue St. Jacques opposite to St. Benoît-le-Bétourné. I do not pretend that he had any affection for Lent; the sentiment would not have been natural in a cook. But he observed the fasts and days of abstinence like a good Christian that he was. For lack of money to buy a dispensation from the Archbishop he supped off haddock on fast-days, with his wife, his son, his dog, and his usual guests, of whom the most assiduous was my good master Monsieur l'Abbé Jérôme Coignard. My pious mother would not have allowed Miraut, our watchdog, to gnaw a bone on Good Friday. That day she put neither meat nor fat in the poor animal's mess. In vain did Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard represent to her that this was doing the wrong thing, and that in all justice, Miraut, who had no share in the sacred mysteries of redemption, ought not to suffer in his allowance.

"My good woman," said this great man, "it is fitting that we, as members of the Church, should

sup off haddock; but there is a certain superstition, impiety, temerity—nay even sacrilege—to associate a dog, as you do, with these mortifications of the flesh, made infinitely precious by the interest God Himself takes in them, and which that interest apart would be contemptible and ridiculous. It is an abuse, which your simplicity renders innocent, but which would be criminal in a Divine, or even in a judiciously minded Christian. Such a practice, my good lady, leads straight to the most shocking heresy. It tends to no less than the upholding of the theory that Jesus Christ died for dogs even as for the sons of Adam. And nothing is more contrary to the Scriptures."

"That may be," replied my mother. "But if Miraut ate meat on Good Friday I should fancy to myself that he was a Jew, and have a horror of him. Is that committing a sin, Monsieur l'Abbé?"

My excellent master answered gently, taking a drink of wine:

"Ah dear creature, without deciding at this moment if you sin or if you do not, I can tell you for a certainty that there is no malice in you, and I believe more surely in your eternal salvation than in that of five or six bishops and cardinals of my acquaintance,

who have nevertheless fine treatises on the canon law."

Miraut swallowed his mess sniffing at it, as if he did not like it, and my father went off with Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard to take a stroll to the *Petit Bacchus*.

Thus passed the holy time of Lent at the *Sign of the Reine Pédauque*. But from early Easter morn, when the bells of St. Benoît-le-Bétourné announced the joyful Resurrection, my father spitted chickens, ducks, and pigeons by the dozen, and Miraut, in the corner by the glowing fire-place, sniffed the good smell of fat, wagging his tail with grave and pensive joy. Old, tired, and nearly blind, he still relished the joys of this life, whose ills he accepted with a resignation which made them less unkind for him. He was a sage, and I am not surprised that my mother associated such a reasonable creature in her good works.

Having heard High Mass we dined in the savoury-smelling shop. My father brought to this repast a pious joy. He had commonly, as companions, a few attorneys' clerks, and my good master Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard. This year of grace 1725, at Easter-tide, I remember, my good master

brought Monsieur Nicolas Cerise, whom he had dragged from a loft in the Rue des Maçons, where this learned man wrote, day and night, news of the republic of letters for Dutch publishers. On the table a mound of red eggs rose from a wire basket. And when Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard had said the Benedicite, these eggs formed the topic of conversation.

"One reads in Ælius Lampridus," said Monsieur Nicolas Cerise, "that a hen owned by the father of Alexander Severus laid a red egg on the birthday of that child destined to Empire."

"This Lampridus, who had not much intelligence," said my good master, "had better have left such a tale to the old wives who have spread it abroad. You have too much good sense, sir, to deduce from this ridiculous fable the Christian custom of serving red eggs on Easter Day?"

"I do not indeed believe," replied Monsieur Nicolas Cerise, "that this usage is derived from the egg of Alexander Severus. The only conclusion that I wish to draw from the fact, as reported by Lampridus, is that a red egg, among the heathen, presaged supreme power. For the rest," he added, "that egg must have been reddened in some manner, for hens do not lay red eggs."

"Excuse me," said my mother, who was standing by the fire-place decorating the dishes, "in my childhood I saw a hen who laid eggs shading into brown; that is why I am ready to believe that there are hens whose eggs are red, or of a colour approaching red, as for instance brick-colour."

"That is quite possible," said my good master, "and nature is more diverse and varied in her productions than we commonly believe. There are oddities of every sort in the generating of animals, and one sees in natural-history collections far stranger monsters than a red egg."

"For instance, they keep a calf with five feet, and a child with two heads, in the King's collection," said Monsieur Nicolas Cerise.

"They can better that at Auneau, near Chartres," said my mother, putting on the table, as she spoke, a dozen strings of sausages and cabbage, whence a pleasing odour rose up to the joists of the ceiling. "I saw there, gentlemen, a new-born infant with goose-feet and a serpent's head. The midwife who received it got such a shock that she threw it in the fire."

"Be careful," said Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, "be careful, for man is born of woman to serve God, and it is unimaginable that he could serve Him

with a serpent's head, and it follows therefore that there are no children of the kind, and that your midwife was dreaming or making fun of you."

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said Monsieur Nicolas Cerise, with a slight smile. "You have seen as I have, in the King's collection, a bi-sexual fœtus with four legs, preserved in a jar filled with spirits of wine, and in another jar, a child without a head and with an eye over the navel. Could these monsters serve God any better than the child with the serpent's head our hostess speaks of? And what is one to say of those who have two heads, so that one does not know whether they have two souls? Acknowledge, Monsieur l'Abbé, that nature, while amusing herself with such cruel sport, puzzles the theologian no little?"

My good master had already opened his mouth to speak, and doubtless he would have entirely demolished the objection of Monsieur Nicolas Cerise, had not my mother, whom nothing could stop when she wanted to speak anticipated him by saying very loudly that the child at Auneau was no human creature, and it was the devil himself who had fathered it on a baker's wife. "And the proof is," she added, "that no one thought of having it baptized, and that it was buried in a napkin at the bottom of

the enclosed garden. If it had been a human being it would have been buried in consecrated ground. When the devil fathers a child it takes the shape of an animal."

"My good woman," replied Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, "it is marvellous that a villager should know more of the devil than a Doctor of Divinity. I admire the way you interest yourself in the matron of Auneau, to the extent of knowing if such fruit of a woman is one with mankind, redeemed by the blood of God. Believe me, these deviltries are but unclean fancies which you should purge from your mind. It is not written in the Fathers that the devil fathers children on poor girls. All these tales of satanic fornication are disgusting imaginings, and it is a disgrace that the Jesuits and Dominicans have written treatises on them."

"You speak well, Abbé," said Monsieur Nicolas Cerise, impaling a sausage from the dish. "But you give no answer to what I said, that the children born without heads are far from being adapted to the destiny of mankind, which the Church tells us, is to know God and to serve Him and to love Him, and in that, as in the amount of germs which are wasted, nature is not, speaking plainly, sufficiently theological and Christian. I may add that she exhibits

no religious spirit in any of her acts, and seems to ignore her God. That is what frightens me, Monsieur l'Abbé."

"Oh!" cried my father, waving on the end of his fork a drum-stick of the chicken he was carving, "oh! this is indeed gloomy and dreary talk, ill-suited to the feast we celebrate to-day. And it is my wife who is to blame, who offers us a child with a serpent's head as if it were an agreeable dish for honest company. That out of my beautiful red eggs should come so many diabolical tales!"

"Ah, mine host," said Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, "it is true that everything comes out of the egg. From this idea the heathens have drawn many philosophical fables. But that from eggs, so Christian under their antique purple as those we have just eaten, should escape such a flight of wild impieties, that is what amazes me."

Monsieur Nicolas Cerise looked at my good master, winking his eye, and said, with a thin laugh:

"Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, these eggs, whose beetroot-tinted shells lie scattered on the floor under our feet, are not in their essence as Christian and Catholic as it pleases you to think them. Easter Eggs, on the contrary, are of heathen origin, and recall, at the time of spring equinox, the mysterious

burgeoning of life. It is an ancient symbol which has been preserved in the Christian religion."

"One might equably reasonably uphold," said my good master, "that it is a symbol of the Resurrection of Christ. I, for one, have no wish to load religion with symbolical subtleties. I would most willingly believe that the pleasure of eating eggs, denied to us during Lent, is the sole reason why on this day they appear on the tables with honour and clothed in royal purple. But no matter, these are mere trifles, serving to amuse the learned and the bookmen. What is worth considering in your talk, Monsieur Nicolas Cerise, is that you bring into opposition nature and religion, and you want to make them inimical to each other. Impiety! Monsieur Nicolas Cerise. And so horrible that this good fellow of a cook trembles at it without understanding it. But I am not a whit disturbed; and such arguments cannot, even for one minute, seduce a mind which knows how to govern itself.

"In truth, Monsieur Nicolas Cerise, you have proceeded by that rational and scientific route which is but a narrow, short, and dirty blind-alley, on coming to the end of which we break our noses ingloriously. You argue in the manner of a thoughtful apothecary, who thinks he understands nature be-

cause he can smell some of her manifestations. And you have concluded that natural generation producing monsters is no part of the secret of God, Who creates men to celebrate His glory, *'Pulcher hymnus Dei homo immortalis.'* It was very generous of you to omit mention of the new-born who die as soon as they see the light, of the mad, and the imbecile, and all creatures who are not, from your point of view, what Lactantius calls a worthy hymn to God, *Pulcher hymnus Dei.* But what do you know of it all, and what do we know of it all, Monsieur Nicolas Cerise? You take me for one of your readers at Amsterdam or at the Hague, to wish to make me believe that the unintelligibility of nature is an objection to our holy Christian faith. Nature, sir, shows to our eyes but a succession of incoherent images in which it is impossible for us to find a meaning, and I grant you, that according to her, and in tracking her footsteps, I fail to discern in the child that is born either the Christian, the man, or even the individual; and the flesh is an absolutely indecipherable hieroglyphic. But that matters nothing, and we are looking at the wrong side of the tapestry. Do not let us fix our gaze on that, but understand that from that side we can know

nothing. Let us turn entirely to the understandable, which is the human soul united to God.

"You are amusing, Monsieur Nicolas Cerise, with your nature and your generation. You are, to my mind, like some good fellow who thinks he has surprised the King's secrets because he has seen the paintings which decorate the council chamber. In the same way that the secrets are to be found in the conversation of the King and his ministers, so is the fate of man in the thought which proceeds alike from the created and the Creator. All the rest is but folly and amusement, fit to divert the loungers, of whom one sees many in the Academies. Do not talk to me of nature, except of what one sees at the *Petit Bacchus* in the person of Catherine the lace-maker, who is plump and well-made.

"And you, mine host," added Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, "give me to drink, for I have a thirst on me, all the fault of Monsieur Nicolas Cerise, who thinks nature an atheist. And, by a thousand devils, so she is, and perforce must be, to some extent; and if at all times she declares the glory of God, it is without knowing it, for there is no knowledge, save in the mind of man, which alone proceeds from both the finite and the infinite. Give me to drink!"

My father poured out a brimming glass for my good master, Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, and for Monsieur Nicolas Cerise, and forced them to clink their glasses, which they did right heartily, for they were good fellows.

VI

THE NEW MINISTRY

MR. SHIPPEN, who practised the trade of a locksmith at Greenwich, dined every day, during his short stays in Paris, at the *Sign of the Reine Pédauque,* in the company of his landlord and of my good master, Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard.

That day, at dessert, having called for a bottle of wine as was his custom, lighted his pipe, and drawn from his pocket the London *Gazette,* he set himself peaceably to smoke, drink, and read; then folding his paper, and placing his pipe on the edge of the table, he said:

"Gentlemen, the Government is defeated."

"Oh!" said my good master, "it is of no consequence."

"Pardon me," said Mr. Shippen, "it *is* a matter of consequence, for the former ministry being Tory, the new one will be Whig, and moreover, everything that happens in England is of importance."

"Sir," replied my good master, "we have seen greater changes than that in France. We have seen the four officials known as Secretaries of State replaced by six or seven Councils of ten members apiece, and the Secretaries of State hewn in ten pieces and then re-established in their original shape. At each of these changes there were some who swore that all was lost, and others that all was saved. And rhymes were made about it all. For my part, I take little interest in what is done in the King's cabinet, for I notice that the course of life is in no way changed, and after reforms men are as before, selfish, avaricious, cowardly, cruel, stupid and furious by turns, and there is always a nearly even number of births, marriages, cuckolds, and gallows-birds, in which is made manifest the beautiful ordering of our society. This condition is stable, sir, and nothing could shake it, for it is founded on human misery and imbecility, and those are foundations which will never be wanting. The whole edifice gains from them a strength which defies the efforts of the worst of princes and of the ignorant crowd of officials who assist them."

My father, who, larding-pin in hand, was listening to this conversation, made this amendment with deferential firmness: that good ministers are to be

found, and that he could remember one, who had recently died, as the author of a very wise regulation protecting cooks against the devouring ambitions of butchers and confectioners.

"That may be, Monsieur Tournebroche," retorted my good master, "and it is a matter to discuss with confectioners. But what is necessary to consider is that empires subsist, not by the wisdom of certain Secretaries of State, but by the needs of millions of men, who, to live, work at all sorts of lowly and ignoble arts such as industry, commerce, agriculture, war, and navigation. These individual hardships make up what is called the greatness of a people, and neither prince nor ministers have a part in them."

"You are mistaken, sir," said the Englishman, "ministers do their part by making laws, of which a single one may enrich or ruin the nation."

"Oh, as for that," replied the Abbé, "it is a risk that must be run. Since the affairs of the State are so widespread that the intelligence of a single man cannot embrace them, we must forgive ministers for working blindly thereat, and harbour no resentment against the good or evil they do, but suppose that they moved as in a game of blind-man's buff. Moreover, this evil and this good would seem less to us

if estimated without superstition, and I doubt, sir, if a general order could have the effect that you mention. I judge by the women of the town, who are themselves alone, in a year, the object of more regulations than are put forth in a century for all other classes in the kingdom, and who, none the less, carry on their business with an exactitude based on the forces of nature. They laugh at the simple blackening which a magistrate named Nicodème * meditates in regard to them, and make fun of Monsieur Baiselance, the mayor † who has formed, along with several attorneys and treasury officials, an impotent association for their ruin. I can tell you that Catherine, the lace-maker, is ignorant of the very name of Baiselance, and that she will remain ignorant of it until her end, which will be a Christian one—at least I hope so. And I infer that all the laws with which a minister swells his portfolio, are but useless papers which neither enable us to live nor prevent us from living."

"Monsieur Coignard," said the locksmith from Greenwich, "it is easy to see by the baseness of your talk that you are accustomed to servitude. You

* *Vide post,* p. 174.

† Monsieur Baiselance or Baisselance, succeeded Montaigne, considerably later, as Mayor of Bordeaux. [A. F.]

would speak differently of statesmen and laws if you had, as I have, the happiness to enjoy a free Government."

"Mr. Shippen," said the Abbé, "true liberty is that of a soul enfranchised from the vanities of this world. As for public liberty, I do not care a cherry-stone for it! It is an illusion which flatters the vanity of the ignorant."

"You confirm me in the idea," said Mr. Shippen, "that the French are mere monkeys."

"Allow me," said my father, brandishing his larding-pin; "there are lions also to be found amongst them."

"Only citizens fail you then," retorted Mr. Shippen. "All the world discusses public matters in the Tuileries Gardens, without one reasonable notion resulting from their squabbles. Your population is but a turbulent wild-beast show."

"Sir," said my good master, "it is true that when human societies attain to a certain degree of refinement, they turn aside from the manners of a menagerie, and that it is evidence of progress to live in a cage, instead of wandering miserably in the woods. And this tendency is common to all the countries of Europe."

"Sir," said the Greenwich locksmith, "England is

no menagerie, for she has a Parliament on which her Ministers depend."

"Sir," said the Abbé, "it may be that one day France will also have Ministers obedient to a Parliament. Better still. Time brings many changes in the constitution of empires, and one can fancy that, in a century or two, France may adopt popular government. But, sir, secretaries of State, who count for little in our day, will then no longer count for anything. For instead of depending on the King, from whom they derive their period and power, they will be subject to public opinion, and will share its instability. It is to be remarked that statesmen only exercise their power, with any force, in absolute monarchies, as is seen in the example of Joseph the son of Jacob, Pharaoh's Minister, and in that of Haman, Minister to Ahasuerus, who played a great *rôle* in the government; the first in Egypt, the second among the Persians. It needed the coincidence of a strongly established crown and a weak king, in France, to strengthen the arm of a Richelieu. Under popular government, ministers will become so impotent that even their wickedness and stupidity will do harm no more.

"They will receive from the general assemblies only an uncertain and precarious authority; unable

to indulge in far-flung hopes and vast schemes, they will spend their ephemeral existence in wretched expedients. They will grow jaundiced in the unhappy effort to read their orders on the five hundred faces of a crowd, ignorant and at cross-purposes; they will languish in restless impotence. They will become unused to foresee anything or prepare anything, and they will only study intrigue and falsehood. They will fall from so low that their fall will do them no harm, and their names, chalked on the walls by little scribbling school-boys, will make the bourgeois laugh."

Mr. Shippen shrugged his shoulders at this speech.

"It's possible," he said; "I can well enough imagine the French in such a state."

"Oh," said my good master, "in that state the world will go on its way. We shall still have to eat, it is the great need which gives rise to all others."

Mr. Shippen said, shaking out his pipe:

"In the meanwhile they promise us a minister who will favour the farmers, but who will ruin trade if he has his way. I must look to it, for I am a locksmith at Greenwich, and I shall call all the locksmiths together and address them."

He put his pipe in his pocket and went out without saying good-night to us.

VII

THE NEW MINISTRY (*concluded*)

FTER supper, as it was a fine night, Abbé Jérôme Coignard took a turn in the Rue St. Jacques where the lamps were being lighted, and I had the honour to accompany him. He stopped under the porch of St. Benoît-le-Bétourné, and pointing with a plump hand, shaped equally well for scholastic demonstration and for delicate caress, at one of the stone benches ranged on either side beneath the antique statues fouled with obscene scrawls. "Tournebroche, my son," said he, "if you are of the same turn of mind we will take the air for a moment or two on one of these well-polished old stones where so many beggars before us have rested from their troubles. Perchance some of those countless poor creatures have here held quite excellent talk among themselves. . . . We shall run the risk of catching fleas. But you, my son, being at the amorous age, may believe they are Jeannette, the viol player's, or Catherine, the lace-maker's, who are in the habit of bringing their gallants here at

dusk; and their bite will seem sweet to you. That is an illusion permitted to your youth. For me, who am past the age of these charming follies, I shall tell myself that one must not give way too much to the weakness of the flesh, and that a philosopher must not trouble about fleas which, like all else in the world, are among God's mysteries."

So saying, he sat down, taking care not to disturb a small Savoyard and his marmoset who were sleeping their innocent sleep on the old stone bench. I sat down by his side. The conversation which had occupied the dinner-hour came back to my mind:

"Monsieur l'Abbé," I asked this good master, "you were speaking a while ago of ministers. Those of the King did not impress you by their clothes, nor by their coaches, nor by their genius, and you judged them with the freedom of a mind which nothing astonishes. Then, considering the lot of these officials in a popular state (should it ever be established), you showed them to us as wretched to excess and less worthy of praise than of pity. Are you then, perhaps, opposed to free governments as revived from the republics of antiquity?"

"I am personally inclined to love popular government, my son," answered my good master. "My

humbleness of condition draws me towards it, and Holy Writ, of which I have made some study, confirms me in this preference, for the Lord said in Ramah: 'The people of Israel desired a king that I should not reign over them.' And He said, 'Now this will be the manner of king that shall reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them for himself and for his chariots, and to be his horsemen, and some shall run before his chariot. And he will take your daughters to be confectioners and to be cooks and to be bakers.' *Filias quoque vestras faciet sibi unguentarias et focarias et panificas.* That is said expressly in the Book of Kings, and one still sees that the monarch brings his subjects two grievous gifts: war and tithes. And if it be true that monarchies are of Divine institution it is equally true that they present all the characteristics of human imbecility and wickedness. It is credible that Heaven has given them to the people for their chastisement: *Et tribuit eis petitionem eorum.*

> 'Often in His anger He accepts our sacrifice
> His gifts are often the penalty of our crimes.'

I could quote, my son, many fine passages from old authors where the hatred of tyranny is described

with admirable vigour. Finally, I think I have always shown some strength of soul in disdaining the pride of the flesh, and have, quite as much as the Jansenist Blaise Pascal, the disgust for swashbucklers. All these reasons speak to my heart and to my intelligence in favour of popular government. I have made it the subject of meditations, which one day I shall put down in writing, in a work of that kind of which they say that one must break the bone to find the marrow. I want you to understand from that, that I shall compose a new *Praise of Folly* which will appear frivolity to the frivolous, but the wise will recognise wisdom under the cap and bells. In short, I shall be a second Erasmus; following his example I shall teach the people by a learned and judicious playfulness. And you will find, my son, in one chapter of this treatise, every enlightenment on the subject that interests you; you will acquire a knowledge of the condition of statesmen placed in dependence on popular states or assemblies."

"Oh, Monsieur l'Abbé!" I cried, "how impatient I am to read this book! When do you think it will be written?"

"I do not know," replied my good master, "and truth to tell I think I shall never write it. Plans made by man are often thwarted. We have no

power over the smallest particle of the future, and this uncertainty, common to Adam's race, is carried to extremes in my case by a long series of misfortunes. That is why, my son, I despair of ever being able to compose this respectable jest. Without giving you a political treatise, seated on this bench, I will tell you at least how I came to have the idea of introducing into my imaginary book a chapter wherein would appear the weakness and spite of servants taken on by good man Demos when master, if he ever becomes so, of which I am not quite decided, for I do not meddle in prophecy, leaving this preoccupation to maidens who vaticinate after the manner of the sibyls such as the Cumean, the Persian, or the Tiburtine, *'quarum insigne virginitas est et virginitatis præmium divinatio.'* Let us then turn to our subject. It is nearly twenty years since I lived in the pleasant town of Séez, where I was librarian to the Bishop. Some travelling actors, who chanced to pass, gave a fairly good tragedy in a barn; I went to it and saw a Roman emperor appear whose wig was decorated with more laurels than a ham at the fair of Saint Laurence. He seated himself in a curule chair; his two ministers, in court dress with their impressive insignia, took their place on either side on stools, and the

three formed a Council of State before the footlights which stank exceedingly. Eventually, during the course of their deliberations, one of the councillors drew a satirical portrait of the consuls during the latter period of the Republic. He showed them as impatient to use and abuse their temporary power—enemies of the public good, and jealous of their successors, in whom they were only assured of seeing accomplices to their robbery and peculation. This is how he spoke:

'These little monarchs, reigning for a year,
Seeing the limit of their rule so near,
Spoil the green fruit, of fairest seed and growth,
Rather than leave what they to leave are loath.
Since they have little part in what they wield,
Take a full harvest from the public field,
Assured of pardon, for their easy heirs
Hope for like treatment when the turn is theirs.'*

"Well, my son, these lines which, by their sententious precision recall the quatrains of Pibrac, are

* Ces petits souverains qu'on fait pour une année,
Voyant d'un temps si court leur puissance bornée,
Des plus heureux desseins font avorter le fruit,
De peur de le laisser à celui que les suit.
Comme ils ont peu de part aux biens dont ils ordonnent,
Dans le champ du public largement ils moissonnent,
Assurés que chacun leur pardonne aisément,
Espérant à son tour un pareil traitement.

more excellent as regards meaning than the rest of the tragedy, which smells a little too much of the pompous frivolities of the princes' Fronde, and is altogether spoilt by the heroic love-affairs of a kind of Duchess de Longueville, who appears under the name of Émilie. I took care to remember them so as to meditate upon them. For one finds beautiful maxims even in works written for the theatre. What the poet says in these eight lines, on consuls of the Roman Republic, applies equally well to ministers of democracies whose power is precarious.

"They are weak, my son, because they depend on a popular assembly, incapable equally of the large and profound views of a politician, and of the innocent stupidity of an idle king. Ministers are only great if they second, as did Sully, an intelligent prince, or if, like Richelieu, they take the place of the monarch. And who does not feel that Demos will have neither the obstinate prudence of a Henry IV, nor the favourable inertia of a Louis XIII? Even supposing he knows what he wants he will not know how to carry out his wishes, nor even if they be feasible. Ordering ill, he will be badly obeyed, and will always believe himself betrayed. The deputies he will send to his States-General will keep up his

illusions by ingenious lies up to the moment of falling under his unjust or legitimate suspicions. These states will perpetuate the same confused mediocrity as the mob from which they spring. They will revolve multiple and obscure thoughts. They will give the heads of government the task of carrying out vague wishes of which they themselves are not conscious, and their ministers, more unhappy than Œdipus in the fable, will be devoured, each in turn, by the Sphinx with a hundred heads for not having guessed the riddle of which the Sphinx herself was ignorant. The source of their greatest unhappiness will be their enforced resignation to impotence, and to talk instead of action. They will become rhetoricians and very bad rhetoricians, for talent, bringing some clarity with it, will be their undoing. They will have to train themselves to speak without saying anything, and the least foolish amongst them will be condemned to lie more than all the others. So, the most intelligent will become the most despicable. And if any are to be found clever enough to conclude treaties, regulate finance, and see to business, their knowledge will serve them nothing, for time will fail them, and time is the stuff of great undertakings.

"These humiliating conditions will discourage

the good and lend ambition to the bad. From all sides, ambitious incompetence will rise from the depth of struggling villages to the first posts in the State, and as probity is not natural to mankind, but must be cultivated with great care and long-continued artifice, we shall see clouds of peculators fall on the public treasury. The evil will be much increased by the outburst of scandal, for, as it is difficult to hide anything under popular government, by the fault of some all will become suspect.

"I do not conclude from this, my son, that people will be more unhappy then than they are now; I have told you often enough in our former conversations that I do not think the fate of a nation depends on its prince and its ministers, and it is ascribing too much virtue to laws to make them the source of general prosperity or unhappiness. Nevertheless, the multitude of laws is grievous, and I also fear that the States-General will abuse their legislative powers.

"It is the harmless foible of Colin and Jeannot to frame laws while they keep their sheep, and to say: 'If I were king!' When Jeannot is king he will promulgate more edicts in a year than the Emperor Justinian codified during all his reign. It is in that di-

rection, it seems to me, that Jeannot's reign will prove formidable. But that of kings and emperors was usually so bad one could not fear a worse, and Jeannot, no doubt, will not commit many more follies, nor wickednesses, than all those princes girt with the double or triple crown, who, since the deluge, have covered the world with blood and destruction. His very incapacity and turbulence will have this much good in them that they will render impossible those learned correspondences between country and country we call diplomacy, which end in nothing but in the artistic lighting-up of useless and disastrous wars. The ministers of good man Demos unceasingly kicked, hustled, humiliated, thrown down and assailed with more rotten apples and eggs than the worst harlequin in a booth at a fair, will have no leisure to prepare carnage politely, in the secrecy and peace of the cabinet, on the board of green cloth, by conferences in regard to what is called the balance of Europe, which is but the happy hunting-ground of the diplomat. There will be no more foreign policy, and that will be a great thing for unhappy humanity."

At these words my good master rose up, and continued as follows: "It is time to go in, my son, for

I feel the dew penetrate by reason that my clothes are in holes in various places. Also, by remaining any longer under this porch, we risk frightening away the lovers of Catherine and Jeannette, who here await the hour of tryst."

VIII

THE CITY MAGISTRATES

HAT evening we betook ourselves, my master and I, to the arbour of the *Petit Bacchus,* where we found Catherine the lace-maker, the lame cutler, and the father who begot me. They were all seated at the same table before a jug of wine, of which they had taken enough to be pleasant and sociable.

Two magistrates had just been elected according to form, out of four, and my father was talking of it, according to the measure of his lights and his talents.

"The pity is," said he, "that these city magistrates are gentlemen of the long robe, and not cooks, and that they hold their magistracy from the king, and not from the tradesmen, notably not from the corporation of Parisian cooks of which I am the banner-bearer. If they were of my choosing they would abolish tithes and the salt tax, and we should all be happy. . . . At any rate, if the world does not walk backwards like a crab, a day will come

when magistrates will be elected by the tradesmen."

"No doubt," said Monsieur l'Abbé, "magistrates will one day be elected by the masters and their apprentices."

"Mind what you are saying, Monsieur l'Abbé," said my father anxiously, and drawing his brows together. "When apprentices mix themselves up with the election of magistrates all will be lost. In the days when I was apprenticed I thought of nothing but of misappropriating my master's wife and goods. But since I own a shop and a wife I attend to the public interest, in which my own is bound up."

Lesturgeon, our landlord, brought a jug of wine. He was a small, red-haired man, quick, and rough.

"You speak of the new magistrates," he said, his hands on his hips, "I only wish them as much wisdom as the old ones, who were nevertheless not very knowing about the public welfare. But they were beginning to learn their business. You know, Monsieur Léonard" (he spoke to my father), "the school where the children of the Rue St. Jacques go to learn their alphabet, is built of wood, and a slow match and a few shavings would suffice to make it blaze like a veritable midsummer night's bonfire. I warned the gentlemen of the Hôtel de Ville about it. My letter did not err in style for I had it writ-

ten for sixpence by a scrivener who has a stall under the Val-de-Grace. I represented to the magistrate that all the small boys of the neighbourhood were in daily danger of being grilled, like chitterlings, which was a matter for thought, having regard to the sensibility of mothers. The magistrate who has to do with the schools answered politely, after a year had elapsed, that the danger run by the small boys of the Rue St. Jacques roused all his solicitude, and that he was eager to remove it, and, in consequence he was sending a fire-engine to the afore-mentioned pupils. 'The king,' he added, 'having in his goodness built a fountain in commemoration of his victories, at two hundred paces from the school, water would not be lacking, and the children will learn in a few days to manage the engine which the town consents to grant them free.'

"On reading this letter I jumped to the ceiling. And returning to Val-de-Grace I dictated a reply to the scrivener as follows:

" 'Honoured City-magistrate—Sir, in the schoolhouse of the Rue St. Jacques are two hundred youngsters, of whom the oldest is but seven years of age. These are fine firemen, sir, to work your fire-engine. Take it back again, and have a schoolhouse built of stone and rubble.'

"This letter, like the former one, cost me sixpence, including the seal. But I did not lose my money, for, after twenty months had passed, I received a reply in which the magistrate assured me that the youngsters of the Rue St. Jacques were worthy of the care of the Parisian magistrates, who would prudently watch over their safety. We remain there. If my magistrate leaves his post I shall have to begin all over again, and pay a shilling once more to the scrivener in the Val-de-Grace. That is why, Monsieur Léonard, although I am firmly convinced there are faces at the town-hall which would be better fitted to play the buffoon at a fair, I have not the slightest desire to see new faces there, and I particularly wish to keep him of the fire-engine."

"For my part," said Catherine, "it is the *Lieutenant-Criminel* I have a grudge against. He allows Jeannette, the viol player, to prowl about every day, at twilight, under the porch of St. Benoît-le-Bétourné. It is a disgrace. She walks through the streets with a kerchief tied round her head, and trails her dirty skirts through every gutter in the place. The public places should be reserved for girls well turned-out enough to show themselves with credit."

"Oh! I reckon the pavement belongs to all the world," said the lame cutler. "And one of these days I shall follow the example of our landlord, Lesturgeon, and go to the scrivener in the Val-de-Grace to get him to draw up, in my name, a fine petition in favour of poor hawkers. I cannot push my cart into a good position but I am at once bothered by the police, and as soon as a lackey or a couple of servant-girls stop at my stall, a big, black rascal turns up and orders me, in the name of the law, to go and undo my bundle elsewhere. Sometimes I am on ground rented by the market people, at others I find myself a near neighbour of Monsieur Leborgne, sworn cutler. Another time I must yield the pavement to the carriage of a bishop or a prince. And there I am, getting into my harness and pulling at the straps, happy if the lackeys and the chamber-maids have not carried off without payment, profiting by my awkwardness, a needle-case, some scissors, or a fine blade from Chatellerault. I am sick of suffering tyranny. I am sick of experiencing the injustice of the justiciaries. I feel a great desire to revolt."

"I know from that sign," said my good master, "that you are a magnanimous cutler."

"I am not at all magnanimous, Monsieur l'Abbé,"

modestly replied the cripple, "I am vindictive, and resentment has pushed me to sell, in secret, songs written against the king, his mistresses, and his ministers. I keep a fairly good assortment in the tilt of my cart. Do not betray me. That of the twelve reed-pipes is admirable."

"I will not betray you," answered my father, "a good song is worth a glass of wine to me, and even more, I do not say anything either about the knives, and I am glad, my good fellow, that you sell yours, for all the world must live. But acknowledge that one cannot allow wandering hawkers to enter into competition with tradesmen who rent a shop and pay taxes. Nothing is more contrary to law and order. The impudence of these draggle-tails is unspeakable. How far would it not go were it not checked. Last year did not a peasant from Montrouge come to a stop in front of the *Reine Pédauque* with his little cart full of pigeons that he was selling, ready cooked, for two liards and a sou cheaper than I sell mine! And the bumpkin cried, in a voice fit to crack the windows of my shop, 'Beautiful pigeons for five sous.' I threatened him twenty times with my larding-pin. But he answered me, stupidly, that the street belonged to all the world. I made a complaint to the *Lieutenant-Criminel* who saw justice

done, and rid me of the villain. I do not know what has become of him, but I owe him a grudge for the harm he did me, for the sight of my usual customers, buying his pigeons, by couples, nay even by half-dozens, gave me an attack of jaundice, from the effect of which I became melancholy for a long time. I wish they'd stick as many feathers on his body, with glue, as he had plucked from the winged creatures he sold ready-cooked in my very face, and that thus be-feathered from head to foot he was led through the streets at the tail of his cart."

"Monsieur Léonard," said the lame cutler, "you are hard on poor people. It is thus the unfortunate are driven to desperation."

"Master Cutler, I counsel you," said my good master, laughing, "to order at the Innocents by some paid writer, a satire on Maitre Léonard and to sell it along with your songs on the twelve pipes of King Louis. Our friend here should be celebrated a little, who, in a semi-servile state, aspires, not to freedom but to tyranny. I conclude from all your talking, gentlemen, that the policing of towns is a difficult art, that one must try and reconcile diverse and often contrary interests, that the public welfare is made up of a large number of private and individual woes, and that in fact, it is al-

ready rather wonderful that people shut up within walls do not devour one another. It is a blessing one must attribute to their poltroonery. Public peace is founded simply on the feeble courage of citizens who hold each other in respect by reason of their reciprocal fear. And the prince, in inspiring all with awe, assures to them the inestimable benefit of peace. As to your magistrates, whose power is weak, and who are incapable of serving or of injuring you much, and whose merits consist chiefly in their tall canes and wigs, do not complain overmuch that they are chosen by the king and ranked, or little short of it, since the last reign, with officers of the Crown. Friends of the prince, they are vaguely inimical to all citizens, and this enmity is rendered bearable to each by the perfect equality with which it bears upon all. It is like rain, of which one with another we receive but a few drops. One day, when they are elected by the people (as they tell us they were in the early days of the monarchy) magistrates will have friends and foes in the town. Elected by the shop-people, paying rent and tithes, they will ill-use the hawkers. Elected by the hawkers, they will ill-use the tradesmen. Elected by the artisans, they will be in opposition to the masters, who make the artisans work.

It will be an incessant cause of dispute and quarrels. They will form a turbulent council where each will agitate for the interests and passions of his electors. Nevertheless, I fancy they will not make the present magistrates regretted who only depend on the prince. Their clamorous vanity will amuse the citizens who will see themselves as in an enlarging mirror. They will employ mediocre powers after a mediocre fashion. Risen from the mass of the people they will be as incapable of fostering it as of restraining it. The rich will be frightened at their audacity, and the poor will blame their fearfulness, whereas they will really display only noise and impotence. For the rest, they may be equal to common tasks, and to administering the public wealth with that insufficient sufficiency which they always attain to and never get beyond."

"Ouf!" said my father, "you have spoken well, Monsieur l'Abbé—now drink!"

IX

SCIENCE

THAT day we tramped as far as the Pont Neuf, my good master and I, where the recesses were covered with those trestles on which the second-hand booksellers expose a conglomeration of romances and books of devotion. There one may find at twopence apiece the complete *Astrée* and the *Grand Cyrus,* worn and thumbed by provincial readers, with the "Ointment for Burns," and divers works of the Jesuits. My good master was accustomed, in passing, to read some pages of these works, of which he made no purchase, being out of funds, and wisely keeping for the *Petit Bacchus* the sixpence he happened by a rare chance to have in his breeches' pocket. For the rest, he did not thirst to possess the good things of this world, and the best works did not make him envious so long as he could get acquainted with the noble passages in them, on which he expatiated afterwards with admirable wisdom. The trestles of the Pont Neuf pleased him in that the books were impregnated

with the smell of frying from the near neighbourhood of the hot-potato sellers, and this great man inhaled at the same time the welcome fragrance of cooking and of science.

Adjusting his spectacles, he examined the display of a second-hand dealer with the contentment of a happy soul, to which all things are gracious, for all things gain a grace from their reflection in it.

"Tournebroche, my son," he said to me, "there are books to be found on the stall of this good man, fashioned in the days when printing was, so to speak, in its swaddling-clothes, and these books still suffer from the effects of the roughness of our forbears. I find a barbarous chronicle of Monstrelet, an author said to have been more frothy than a pot of mustard, and two or three lives of Ste. Marguerite, which the gossips of old put as a compass on their stomachs during the pains of childbirth. It would be inconceivable that men could be so idiotic as to write and to read similar absurdities, if our holy religion did not teach us that they are born with a germ of imbecility. And as the light of faith has never failed me, not even, happily, in the sins of the couch or of the table, I can more easily understand their past stupidity than their present intelligence, which, to speak frankly, appears

to me illusory and deceptive, as it will seem to future generations, for man is in his essence a stupid animal, and the progress of his mind is but the empty consequence of his restlessness. That is the reason, my son, that I mistrust what they call science and philosophy, which are, to my mind, but an abuse of visions, and fallacious figures, and, in a certain sense, the advantage gained by the evil spirit over the soul. You will understand that I am far from believing all the devilries with which popular credulity frightens itself. I think with the Fathers that temptation is within us, and that we are to ourselves our own demons and bedevilments. But I bear a grudge against Monsieur Descartes and against all the philosophers who, following his example, have searched for a rule of life and the principles of conduct in the knowledge of nature. For, after all, Tournebroche, my son, what is knowledge of nature if it be not a fantasy of the senses? And what does science add to it, I ask you, with its savants, from the time of Gassendi, who was no donkey, and Descartes and his disciples, down to that precious fool, Monsieur de Fontenelle? Large spectacles, my son, spectacles like those which sit on my nose. All the microscopes and telescopes which we make a show of, what are they but glasses

a little clearer than these of mine, that I bought last year at the fair of St. Laurence, of which the glass for the left eye, the one I see the best with, was unhappily crackd this winter by a footstool flung at my head by the lame cutler, who fancied I was kissing Catherine the lace-maker, for he is a coarse man, and utterly obfuscated by his visions of carnal desires. Yes, Tournebroche, my son, what are these instruments with which the savants and the curious fill their galleries and their cabinets? What are spectacles, astrolabes, compasses, if not the means of helping the senses to keep their illusions, and to multiply our fatal ignorance of nature while we multiply our relations with her? The most learned among us differ merely from the ignorant by the faculty they acquire of amusing themselves with manifold and complicated errors. They see the world in a faceted topaz, instead of seeing it as does Madame, your mother, for instance, with the naked eye the good God has given her. But they do not alter their eyes in donning spectacles; they do not alter dimensions in using apparatus proper to the measurement of space; they do not alter the weight of things in using very sensitive scales. They discover new appearances merely, and are but the plaything of new illusions. That is all! If I were not

convinced, my son, of the holy truths of our religion, there would be left to me in this conviction, which I hold, that all human knowledge is but a progress in phantasmagoria, nothing but to throw myself from this parapet into the Seine, which has seen many others drown since she began to flow, or to go and ask of Catherine that form of oblivion from the ills of this world which one finds in her arms, and for which it would be indecent for me to look, in my position, and above all, at my age. I should not know what to believe in the midst of all this apparatus, whose powerful deceptions would increase immeasurably the falsehood of my outlook and I should be an entirely miserable academician."

My good master was talking in this fashion before the first recess to the left, counting from the Rue Dauphine, and he was beginning to frighten the dealer who took him for an exorcist, when he suddenly picked up an old geometry, illustrated with sufficiently bad cuts by Sebastien Leclerc. *

"Perhaps," he said, "instead of drowning myself in love or in water, if I were not a Christian and a

* The geometry of which Jacques Tournebroche speaks is decorated with designs by Sebastien Leclerc which I, on the contrary, admire for their precise elegance and delicate exactitude, but one must endure contradiction (ANATOLE FRANCE).

Catholic, I should decide to throw myself into the study of mathematics where the mind finds the aliment of which it is most in need, to wit: sequence and continuity. And I vow that this little book, quite ordinary as it is, gives me a certain good opinion of man's genius."

At these words he opened the treatise by Sebastien Leclerc so widely, at the section concerning triangles, that he nearly broke it clean in two. But soon he flung it down in disgust.

"Alas," he murmured, "numbers depend on time, lines on space, and these again are but human illusions. Without man there is neither mathematics nor geometry, and it is, after all, but a form of knowledge which does not draw us out of ourselves, although it affects an air of quite magnificent independence."

Having spoken, he turned his back on the relieved bookstall-keeper, and drew a long breath.

"Ah! Tournebroche, my son," he continued, "you see me suffering from an ill that I have brought on myself, and burnt with the fiery tunic with which I have been at such pains to clothe and deck myself."

He spoke thus in a fanciful fashion, being in reality clad in a shocking old overcoat generally

held together by two or three buttons which, moreover, were not even fastened in their own buttonholes, and, as he was accustomed to say laughingly, when one spoke to him of it, "It was an adulterous connection, a presentation of city manners!"

He spoke with warmth:

"I hate science," said he, "for having loved it too much, after the manner of voluptuaries who reproach women with not having come up to the dream they formed of them. I wanted to know everything, and I suffer to-day for my culpable folly. Happy," added he, "oh! very happy are those good people assembled round that vendor of quack medicines."

And he pointed with his hand to the lackeys, the chambermaids, and the porters of St. Nicolas, forming a circle round a practitioner who was giving a demonstration with his attendant.

"Look, Tournebroche," said he, "they laugh heartily when that funny fellow kicks the other man's behind. And in truth it is a pleasant sight, quite spoilt for me by thinking about it, for when one looks for the essence of this foot and the rest of it, one laughs no more, I ought, being a Christian, to have recognised earlier the malignity of that heathen saying, 'Happy is he who knows the cause

of things.' I ought to have shut myself in holy ignorance as in an enclosed garden, and remained as the little children. I should not truly have been amused with the coarse play of this Mondor (this Molière of the Pont Neuf would have had little attraction for me when his prototype already appears to me too scurrilous *), but I should have found pleasure in the plants of my garden, I should have praised God in the flowers and fruit of my apple-trees.

"An immoderate curiosity has led me astray my son; I have lost, in the intercourse with books and learned men, the peace of heart, holy simplicity, and that purity of the simple-minded, all the more admirable in that it falters neither in the tavern nor in the hovel; as may be seen in the example of the lame cutler, and, if I dare say so, in that of your father, the cook, who retains much innocence though drunken and debauched. But it is not thus with him who has studied books. They leave, eternally, a bitter superiority, and a proud sadness."

Talking thus, his speech was cut off by the roll of drums.

* It is a priest speaking thus (ANATOLE FRANCE).

X

THE ARMY

SO, being on the Pont Neuf, we heard the roll of drums. It was the call to attention of a recruiting-sergeant, who, hand on hip, was strutting in an open space in front of a dozen soldiers, who were carrying bread and sausages spiked on the bayonets of their guns. A circle of beggars and youngsters looked on open-mouthed.

He twirled his moustache and made his proclamation.

"Do not let us listen to him," said my good master to me. "It would be waste of time. This sergeant speaks in the king's name. He has no talent for speaking. If it would please you to hear a clever discourse on the same subject you should go into one of those bakehouses on the Quai de la Ferraille, where the crimps cajole the lackeys and bumpkins. These crimps, being rascals, are bound to be eloquent. I remember, in my youth, in the time of the late king, having heard the most wonderful harangue from the mouth of one of these

dealers in men, who kept shop in the Unhappy Valley, which you can see from here, my son. Recruiting men for the Colonies: 'Young men who surround me,' said he, 'you have no doubt heard tell of the Land of Cockayne; it is to India you must go to find this land of fortune, where one is in clover. Do you wish for gold, pearls, diamonds? The roads are paved with them, one has but to stoop to pick them up. And you need not even stoop. The savages will pick them up for you. I do not even mention the coffee, the lemons, pomegranates, oranges, pineapples, and the thousand delicious fruits which grow without cultivation as in an earthly paradise. Did I speak to women and children I might extol all these dainties, but I am talking to men.' I omit, my son, all that he said about glory, but you may believe he equalled Demosthenes in vigour and Cicero in fluency. The result of his discourse was the sending of five or six unhappy beings to die of yellow fever in the swamps, so true is it that eloquence is a dangerous weapon, and that talent for the arts exercises its irresistible force for evil as well as for good. Thank God, Tournebroche, in that, not having given you talents of any kind, He does not expose you to become one day the scourge of nations. One recognises

the favourites of God by their lack of wit, and I have experienced that the fairly quick intelligence heaven has given me has been but an unceasing cause of danger to my peace in this world and in the next. What would it be if the heart and thought of a Cæsar dwelt in my head and my breast? My desires would recognise no sex and I should be untouched by pity. I should light the fire of inextinguishable war at home and abroad. And yet the great Cæsar had a delicate soul and a certain gentleness. He died decently under the dagger of his virtuous assassins. Day of the Ides of March! Ever fatal day, when sententious brutes destroyed this charming monster! I am fain to weep over the divine Julius along with Venus, his mother, and if I call him a monster it is from affection, for in his equable soul nothing was excessive save power. He had a natural feeling for rhythm and proportion. He found equal pleasure in his youth in the beauties of debauchery or those of grammar. He was an orator, and his beauty doubtless ornamented the purposed dryness of his speeches. He loved Cleopatra with that geometric exactitude that he brought to all his doings. He put in his writings and in his actions his talent for clarity. He was the friend of order and peace,

even in war, sensitive to harmony, and so able a maker of laws that we still live, barbarians as we are, under the majesty of his rule, which has made the world what it is to-day. You see, my son, I am not sparing in praise or love for him. Commander, dictator, sovereign-pontiff he moulded the world with his beautiful hands. And I—I, have been professor of eloquence at the college of Beauvais, secretary to an opera-singer, librarian to my Lord Bishop of Séez, public-writer at the cemetery of the Holy Innocents, and tutor to the son of your father at the sign of the *Reine Pédauque*. I have made a beautiful catalogue of precious manuscripts, I have written some pamphlets, of which it is best not to speak, and set down on waste-paper certain maxims scornfully declined by the booksellers. Nevertheless, I would not change my existence for that of the great Cæsar. It would cost my innocence too much. And I would rather be an obscure man, poor and despised, as indeed I am, than rise to the height whence new destinies are opened to the world through paths of blood.

"This recruiting-sergeant, whom you can hear from here promising these vagabonds a half-penny a day, with bread and meat, fills me, my son,

with profound reflections on war and armies. I have worked at all trades save that of a soldier, which has always filled me with disgust and terror, by the characteristics of servitude, false glory, and cruelty, attached to it, which are in direct opposition to my peaceful temper, to my wild love of freedom, and to my turn of mind, which, judging sanely of glory, estimates at its rightful worth that attainable by a musketeer. I am not speaking at all of my incorrigible leaning to meditation which would have been exceedingly thwarted by sword and gun exercise. Not desirous of being Cæsar you will easily understand that neither do I wish to be a La Tulipe or Brin-d'Amour. And I own to you, my son, that military service seems to me to be the most terrible pest of civilised nations.

"This is the opinion of a philosopher. There is nothing to show that it will ever be shared by a large number of people. And in actual fact, kings and republics will always find as many soldiers as they want for their parades and their wars. I have read Machiavelli's treatises at Monsieur Blaizot's, at the sign of the *Image de Sainte Catherine,* where they are all very nicely bound in parchment. They deserve it, my son, and, for my part, I hold an infinitely high opinion of the Florentine

secretary, who was the first to remove from political action the legendary foundation of justice, on which they set up nothing but highly respectable villainies. This Florentine, seeing his country at the mercy of its hireling defenders, conceived the idea of a national and patriotic army. He says somewhere in his books that it is right that all citizens should unite for the safety of their country and all be soldiers. I have likewise heard this theory sustained at Monsieur Blaizot's by Monsieur Roman, who is very zealous, as you know, for state rights. He has no care save for the general, and the universal, and will never be content until the day when every private interest is sacrificed to the public interest. Thus Machiavelli and Monsieur Roman wish us all to be soldiers, since we are all citizens. I do not say, as do they, that it is just, nor do I say that it is unjust, because justice and injustice are matter for debate, and it is a subject which only sophists can decide."

"What! my good master," I cried in sorrow and surprise, "you hold that justice depends on the reasoning of a sophist, and that our actions are just or unjust according to the arguments of a clever man! Such a maxim shocks me more than I can say."

"Tournebroche, my son," replied Monsieur

l'Abbé Coignard, "you must consider that I speak of human justice, which is different from God's justice, and generally opposed to it. Men have never upheld the idea of justice and injustice save by eloquence which is prone to embrace the for and against. Perhaps, my son, you would seat justice on sentiment, but beware lest on this petty site you merely raise some humble domestic hovel, some cabin of old Evander, or hut for a Philemon and Baucis. But the palace of law, the tower of State institutions, needs other foundations. Ingenuous nature alone could not support such weight of inequity, and these redoubtable walls rise from a foundation of most ancient falsehood, by the subtle and fierce art of law-givers, magistrates, and princes. It is folly, Tournebroche my son, to enquire if a law be just or unjust, and it is the same of military service as of other institutions of which one cannot say if they be good or bad on principle, since there is no principle saving God, from Whom all things come. You must protect yourself, my son, against this kind of slavery to words, to which men submit themselves with such docility. Know then, that the word justice has no meaning, if it be not in theology, where it is terribly expressive. Recognise that Monsieur Roman is but a sophist when he demonstrates to you

that one owes service to a prince. Nevertheless, I think if the prince ever orders all citizens to become soldiers, he will be obeyed, I don't say with docility, but light-heartedly. I have noticed that the profession most natural to man is that of a soldier; it is the one to which he is drawn the most easily by his instincts, and by his tastes, which are not always good. And beyond some rare exceptions, of which I am one, man may be defined as an animal with a musket. Give him a fine uniform with the hope of fighting, and he will be happy. Also, we make the military calling the noblest, which is true, in a sense, for it is the oldest calling, and the earliest of mankind made war. The military calling, moreover, has this appropriateness to human nature, that it never thinks, and clearly we are not made for thought.

"Thought is a malady peculiar to certain individuals which cannot propagate itself without promptly ending the race. Soldiers live in company, and man is a sociable animal. They wear blue-and-white, or blue-and-red, or grey-and-blue coats, ribbons, plumes, and cockades, which give them the same advantage over women as the cock over the hen. They march to war and pillage and man is naturally thievish, libidinous, destructive, and easily touched

by glory. The love of glory decides us Frenchmen, above all, to take up arms. And it is certain, that in public opinion, military glory eclipses all. To be assured of this, read history. La Tulipe may be held excused if he was no more a philosopher than Titus Livius."

XI

THE ARMY (*continued*)

MY good master continued in these terms:

"One must consider, my son, that men joined one to another in the succession of the ages by a chain of which they see but a few links, attach the notion of nobility to customs whose origin was lowly and barbarous. Their ignorance feeds their vanity. They found their glories on old, unhappy, far-off things, and the nobility of the profession of arms is due entirely to that savagery of early times of which the Bible and the poets have preserved the remembrance. And what, in fact, is this military nobility flaunted with so much pride over us, if not the debased legacy of those unfortunate hunters of the woods whom the poet Lucretius has depicted in such a way that one does not know if they be men or beasts? It is wonderful, Tournebroche, my son, that war and the chase, of which the thought alone should overwhelm us with shame and remorse when we recall the wretched needs of our nature and our

inveterate wickedness, serve on the contrary, as matter for vain-glory to men, that Christian peoples should continue to honor the profession of butcher and executioner, when it is of old standing in families, and that finally one estimates among refined people the celebrity of citizens by the quantity of murders and carnage that they bear so to speak, in their veins."

"Monsieur l'Abbé," I said to my good master, "do you not think that the profession of arms is looked upon as noble because of the danger one runs therein and the courage that it is necessary to display?"

"Truly, my son," answered my good master, "if the state of man is noble in proportion to the danger that he runs I do not fear to state that peasants and labourers are the noblest men in the kingdom for they risk death every day by fatigue or hunger. The perils to which soldiers and commanders expose themselves are less in number and in duration, they last but a few hours in a life-time, and consist in facing cannon-balls and bullets which kill less surely than poverty. Men must needs be light and frivolous , my son, to give more honour to a soldier's doings than to the work of a labourer and to place the

destruction of war at a higher price than the arts of peace."

"Monsieur l'Abbé," I asked again, "do you not consider that soldiers are necessary to the safety of the state and that we should honour them in recognition of their usefulness?"

"It is true, my son, that war is a necessity of human nature and one cannot imagine nations who will fight, that is to say, who are neither homicides, pillagers, nor incendiaries. Neither can you conceive a prince who is not in some measure a usurper. They would reproach him too much on that score, and they would despise him for it as one who was no lover of glory. For war is necessary to men; and is more natural to them than peace which is but war's interval. Thus one sees princes hurling their armies on one another on the worst of pretexts, and for the most futile of reasons. They invoke their honour, which is excessively touchy. A mere breath suffices to make a stain on it which cannot be washed save in the blood of ten, twenty, thirty, or a hundred thousand men, in proportion to the population of the contending principalities. If only one thinks of it, it is inconceivable that the honour of a prince can be cleansed by the blood of these unhappy beings, or

rather one realises that it is a mere form of speech, void of meaning; but for words men go willingly to their death. What is yet more wonderful, is that a prince gains much honour from the theft of a province and the outrage that would be punished by death in the case of some daring private individual becomes praiseworthy if it is carried out with the most outrageous cruelty by a sovereign with the help of his hirelings."

My good master, having thus spoken, drew his box from his pocket and sniffed up a few remaining grains of rappee.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," I said, "are there no wars that are just and fought for a good cause?"

"Tournebroche, my son," he answered me, "civilised nations have much overstrained the injustice of war and they have rendered it very iniquitous as well as very cruel. The first wars were undertaken for the establishment of tribes on fertile lands. Thus the Israelites conquered the land of Canaan. Hunger forced them to it. The advancement of civilisation extended war to the conquest of colonies and foreign markets, as is seen in the example of Spain, Holland, England and France. Lastly, one has seen kings and emperors steal provinces of which they had no need, which they ruined, which they

made waste, without profit to themselves and without other advantage than to raise pyramids and triumphal arches. And this abuse of war is the more odious as one must believe that nations are becoming more and more wicked by the advancement of the arts, or rather that war, being a necessity to human nature, is waged for its own sake when there is absolutely no reason for waging it.

"This reflection grieves me deeply, for I am disposed by my condition and inclination to the love of my fellow creatures. And what puts the finishing touch to my sadness, Tournebroche, my son, is that I find my snuff-box is empty, and the want of snuff is where I feel my poverty the most."

As much to distract his thoughts from this personal trouble as to instruct myself in his teaching, I asked him if civil war did not seem to him the most detestable kind of war there was?

"It is odious enough," he replied, "but not so very inept, for members of a state when they come to blows between themselves have more chance of knowing why they fight than in the case where they go to war against a foreign people. Seditious and intestinal quarrels are usually born of the extreme wretchedness of the people. They are the results of despair, and the only issue left to the unhappy be-

ings who may obtain thereby better conditions and sometimes even a hand in the game of ruling. But it is to be remarked, my son, that the more unhappy, and therefore excusable, are the insurgents, the less chance they have of winning the game. Starved and stupefied, armed but with their rage, they are incapable of great plans or of prudent considerations so that they are easily reduced by the prince. He has more difficulty in putting down rebellion among the great, which is to be detested, for it has not the excuse of necessity. In fine, my son, whether civil or foreign, war is execrable, and has a malignity that I detest."

XII

THE ARMY (*concluded*)

"I WILL show you, my son," said my good master, "in the condition of these poor soldiers who are going to serve their king, both man's shame and his glory. In fact, war sets us back and drives us to our natural savagery. It is the result of the ferocity that we have in common with the beasts; not only with lions and cocks, who bring a gallant bearing to it, but with little birds, such as jays and tits, whose ways are very quarrelsome, and even with insects, such as wasps and ants, who fight with a bloodthirstiness of the like of which the Romans themselves have left no example. The principal causes of war are the same in man and animal, who struggle with one another to gain or keep their prey, to defend their nest or their lair, or to gain a mate. There is no distinction in all this, and the rape of the Sabines perfectly recalls those duels between stags which make the woods bloody of a night. We have merely succeeded in lending a certain colouring to base and natural motives by the no-

tions of honour with which we cover them, and without great exactitude at that. If we believe that we fight for every noble motive in these days, the nobility of them dwells entirely in the vagueness of our sentiments. The less the object of war is simple, clear, and precise, the more war itself is odious and detestable. And if it be true, my son, that we have come to killing one another for honour's sake, it is beyond all bounds. We have surpassed the cruelty of wild beasts, who do each other no injury without good reason. And it is only right to say that man is wickeder and more unnatural in his wars than are ants and bulls in theirs. But that is not all, for I detest armies less for the death they sow, than for the ignorance and stupidity that follow in their train. There is no worse enemy of the arts than a captain of mercenaries or marauders, and as a rule commanders are as unfitted for letters as are their soldiers. The habit of imposing his will by force makes your old soldier very awkward in speech, for eloquence has its source in the necessity of persuasion. Also, military men affect a disdain of speech and fine attainments. I remember having known at Séez in the days when I was librarian to the Bishop, an old captain, who had grown grey in harness and passed for a gallant man, wearing proudly a large

scar across his face. He was an old ruffian, and had killed many a man and violated more than one nun quite good-humouredly. He understood his business fairly well and was very particular regarding the appearance of his regiment, which marched past better than any other. In short, a brave man and a good comrade, when it was question of draining a pot as well I saw at the inn of the *Cheval Blanc,* where many a time I held my own against him. Now it happened one night that I accompanied him (for we were good friends) while he was instructing his men how to find their way by the stars. He first let me have Monsieur de Louvois' ordinance on the subject, and as he had repeated it by heart for the last thirty years, he made no more mistakes than in his *Pater* or *Ave.* He started off by saying that the soldiers must begin by searching the heavens for the pole-star, which is fixed in relation to the other stars, which turn round it in the contrary direction to the hands of a watch. But he did not understand all he said. For after having repeated his sentence two or three times in a sufficiently imperious voice, he stooped and said in my ear: 'Show me this beggar of a pole-star, Abbé. The devil take me if I can distinguish it in this mess of candle-ends with which the sky is littered!'

"I told him at once the way to find it, and pointed it out with my finger. 'Oh! Oh!' cried he, 'the silly thing is perched very high! From where we are we cannot see it without straining our necks.' And he immediately gave orders to his officers to withdraw the men fifty paces so they should more easily see the pole-star. What I am telling you, my son, I heard with my own ears, and you will agree that this wearer of a sword had a sufficiently naïve notion of the system of the universe, particularly of the stellar parallaxes. Yet he wore the king's orders on a fine embroidered coat, and was more honoured in the state than a learned divine. It is this uncouthness that I cannot endure in the army."

My good master having stopped to take breath at these words, I asked him if he did not think, despite this captain's ignorance, that one must have much intelligence to win battles? He answered me in these words:

"Taking into consideration, Tournebroche, my son, the difficulty that there is in getting together and leading armies, the knowledge necessary in the attack or the defence of a place, and the ability demanded for a good order of battle, one easily admits that only a genius nearly super-human, such

as that of a Cæsar, is capable of such an undertaking, and one would be astonished that minds were to be found capable of holding all the qualities proper to a true fighting-man. A great commander does not only know the configuration of a country, but its manners and customs, and also the industries of its inhabitants. He keeps in his mind an infinity of little circumstances from which he forms in the end large and simple views. The plans which he has slowly meditated and traced out beforehand, he may change in the midst of action by a sudden inspiration, and he is at the same time, very prudent and very bold; his thoughts move, now with the dull slowness of the mole, now soar up with an eagle's flight.

"Nothing is truer than this. But bethink you, my son, that when two armies are in sight of one another, one of them must be conquered; from which it follows that the other will necessarily be victorious, without its chief in command having all the qualities of a great commander, or without his even having one of them. There are, I take it, clever commanders; there are also lucky ones, whose glory is no less. How, in these astounding collisions, are we to disentangle the effect of art from the result of luck? But you are leading me from my subject, Tournebroche, my son; I want to show you

that war is man's disgrace nowadays, but that in other days it was his pride. Of necessity the arbitrament of empires, war has been the great schoolmistress of the human race. It is by her that men have learnt patience, firmness, disdain of danger, the glory of sacrifice. The day that the herdsmen first rolled pieces of rock to form an enclosure behind which they defended their women and cattle, the first human society was founded, and the progress of the arts assured. This great good that we enjoy, our native land, that august thing the Romans adored above all their gods, the town, 'Urbs,' is the daughter of war.

"The first city was a fortified enclosure, and it was in that rough and bloody cradle that were nursed august laws, flourishing industries, science and learning. And that is why the true God wishes to be called the God of battles.

"What I tell you on this subject, Tournebroche, my son, does not mean that you should sign your engagement to this recruiting-sergeant and be seized with the desire to become a hero as the recipient of sixty strokes of the rod on your back every day, on an average.

"War is, moreover, in our time but an inherited evil, a prurient return to savage life, a criminal puer-

ility. The princes of our day, and especially the late king, will for ever bear the notoriety of having made war the sport and amusement of courts. It saddens me to think that we have not yet seen the end of this preconcerted slaughter.

"As to the future, the unfathomable future, let me, my son, dream of it as more in accord with the spirit of sweetness and equity which dwells in me. The future is a place where there is room for dreams. It is there, as in Utopia, that it pleases the wise men to build. I should like to believe that nations will one day cultivate the virtues in peace. It is in the increasing size of armaments that I flatter myself I see a far-distant presage of universal peace. Armies will augment unceasingly in strength and number. Whole nations will be swallowed up by them. Then the monster will perish from his surfeit. He will burst from too much fatness."

XIII

ACADEMIES

E learnt that day that the Bishop of Séez had just been elected a member of the *Académie Française*. Twenty years ago he had delivered a panegyric on St. Maclou, which was considered rather a good thing, and I am willing to believe that there were some excellent passages in it; for my good master, Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, had put a hand to it before quitting the Bishop's palace with Madame de la Baillive's chambermaid. Monseigneur de Séez was descended from the best Norman aristocracy. His piety, his cellar, and his stable, were justly vaunted throughout the kingdom, and his own nephew dispensed the ecclesiastical patronage all over the country. His election surprised nobody. It was approved by all the world, save by the "grey-stockings" of the *Café Procope*, who are never content. They are grumblers.

My good master blamed them gently for their contradictory temper.

"Of what does Monsieur Duclos complain?" said

he. "Since yesterday, he is the equal of Monseigneur de Séez, who has the handsomest clergy and the finest pack of hounds in the kingdom. For academicians are equal by virtue of the statutes. *

"It is true that it is the insolent equality of revellers, which ceases, when, the meeting over, my lord bishop steps into his chariot, leaving Monsieur Duclos to splash his woollen stockings in the gutter. But if he does not want thus to be put on a par with my lord Bishop of Séez, why does he rub shoulders with the badge bedecked. Why does he not hie him to a tub, like Diogenes, or like me, to a stall

* *Cf.* SAINT-EVREMONT (*Les Académiciens*):

GODEAU. Good-day, dear Colletet.

COLLETET (*throwing himself on his knees*). Say, my lord of Grasse,

What I must do when I before you pass.

Should I not kiss, perhaps, your hallowed shoon?

GODEAU. We are all equal, all Apollo's own.

"Rise up, my Colletet—"

COLLETET. "Does your worship's grace

Permit the liberty, to your very face!"

GODEAU. "Our intercourse is nothing changed, elsewhere

You see me bishop; *Godeau,* simply, here."

Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, lived under the old régime. In those days it was said that the French Academy had the merit of establishing perfect equality between its members, an equality not recognised in law. Nevertheless, it was destroyed in 1793 as "the last refuge of aristocracy."

at the Innocents? It is only in a tub, or in a stall, that one can lord it over this earthly grandeur. It is only there that one is a real prince, and a real lord. Happy is he who has not fixed his hopes on the Academy! Happy is he who lives exempt from fears and desires, and who knows the emptiness of all things! Happy is he who knows that it is equally a vanity to be an Academician, or not to be one. Such a one leads, untroubled, a life obscure and unseen. Fair liberty follows him everywhere he goes. He celebrates in the shade the stilly offices of wisdom, and all the Muses smile on him as on one initiated into their service."

Thus spoke my good master, and I admired the pure enthusiasm which swelled his voice and shone in his eyes. But the restlessness of youth fermented in me. I wanted to take sides, to throw myself into the fight, to declare myself for or against the Academy.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," I asked. "Should not the Academy call to itself the best minds in the kingdom, rather than the uncle of the man who has the ecclesiastical patronage in his gift?" * I asked my good master.

"My son," he answered gently, "if Monseigneur

* He means the bishop whom the king had appointed distributor of ecclesiastical patronage.

de Séez appears austere in his ordinances, great and gallant in his life, and if he is in fact, a paragon among prelates, and pronounced that panegyric on St. Maclou, the exordium of which, relative to the healing of the King's evil by the King of France, seemed to be noble, do you want the Society to turn him out for the sole reason that he has a nephew as powerful as he is amiable? That would be showing a truly ferocious virtue, and punishing Monseigneur de Séez inhumanly for the grandeur of his family. The Academy wished to forget that. That alone, my son, is sufficiently magnanimous."

I was daring enough to make reply to this speech, so carried away was I by the fire of youth.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said I, "allow my feelings to oppose your arguments. All the world knows that Monseigneur de Séez has only become considerable by the suppleness of his character and his manners, and what one admires in him is his skill in detaching himself from both parties. . . . We have seen him glide gently between the Jesuits and the Jansenists, tincting his pale prudence with the roses of Christian charity. . . . He thinks he has done enough when he has displeased no one, and all his care is to sustain his position. Thus it is not his great heart which has gained for him the suffrages

of the Kings' illustrious *protégés.* * Neither is it his great mind. For, with the exception of this panegyric on St. Maclou, which he had (as all the world knows) but the trouble of reading, this peace-loving bishop has only let us hear the depressing instructions issued to his clergy.

"He recommends himself by the amenity of his language and the politeness of his conversation. Are these sufficient titles to immortality?"

"Tournebroche," answered Monsieur l'Abbé, civilly, "you reason with the simplicity given to you by Madame, your mother, at your birth, and I see that you will keep your natural candour for long enough. I congratulate you upon it. But innocence must not make you unjust; it is enough that it leaves you ignorant. The immortality that they have bestowed on Monseigneur de Séez does not call for the attainments of a Bossuet or a Belzunce; it is not graven in the heart of an astounded people—it is inscribed in a big book; and you can well understand that these paper laurels only suit the heads of such heroes.

"If, among the Forty, there are persons of more gentility than genius, what harm do you see in it? Mediocrity triumphs in the Academy. But where

* The king was protector of the Academy.

does it not? Do you see it less powerful in Parliament or in the royal Council, where doubtless it is less fitted to find place? Must one be an exceptional man to work at a dictionary which wishes to regulate custom, and can only follow it?

"Academicians, or academists, were instituted, as you know, to fix the best usage in matters of speech, to purge the language of all archaisms and vulgar impurities, and to see that a second Rabelais, or a second Montaigne, does not arise, smelling of the rabble, or pedantry, or of the provinces. They assembled, to this end, gentlemen, who knew good usage and writers who were interested in knowing it. That gave rise to alarm lest the assembly should, tyrannically, reform the French language. But it was soon recognised that these fears were vain, and the academists, far from imposing custom, obeyed it. In spite of their veto we continue to say as before, 'I shut my door.' *

* It is true that the Academy condemned this expression:

"Custom, too strong, as oftentime before,
Makes us, improperly, say *Shut the Door,*
Usage will, daily, authorise a word,
Natheless employed in manner quite absurd.
Would you escape December's cold and gloom,
You must *Push to the Door* and *Shut the Room.*"

SAINT-EVREMONT (*Les Académiciens*).

"The assembly soon resigned itself to entombing the progress of usage in a big dictionary. It is the sole care of the Immortals. * When they are not sitting they find leisure for recreation with one another. For that they need pleasant companions, easy and affable, amiable colleagues, well-informed men, and men who know the world. This is not always the case with men of great talent. Genius is sometimes unsociable. An exceptional man is rarely a man of resource. The Academy could do without Descartes and Pascal. Who says that it could do well without Monsieur Godeau or Monsieur Conrart, or any other person of a supple, complacent, and circumspect turn of mind?"

"Alas!" I sighed, "then it is no senate of divine beings, or council of immortals, no august Areopagus of poetry and eloquence?"

"By no means, my son. It is a society which teaches manners, and which has gained a great reputation for that among foreign nations, and particularly among the Muscovites. You have no idea what admiration the *Académie Française* inspires among German barons, colonels of the Russian Army and English milords. Europeans rate nothing higher than our Academicians and our

* In those days the Academy awarded no prizes.

dancers. I knew a Sarmatian princess of great beauty who, passing through Paris, impatiently sought for an academician, whoever he might be, to make him a present of her virtue."

"If it be thus," I cried, "why do the academicians risk compromising their good reputation by these unfortunate selections which are so universally blamed?"

"Stop, Tournebroche, my son, do not say anything evil of unfortunate selections," replied my master. "To begin with, in all human undertakings one must take into consideration the part played by chance, which is, upon the whole, the part played by God on earth, and the only occasion where Divine Providence manifests itself clearly in this world. For you well understand, my son, that what we call the absurdity of chance and the caprice of fortune, are, in reality, but the revenge taken in sport by Divine justice on the counsels of the would-be wise. In the second place, it is suitable in assemblies to give some play to caprice and fancy. A perfectly reasonable society would be a perfectly unbearable one. It would languish under the cold rule of justice. It would not have any belief in its own power or freedom if it did not taste, from time to time, the delicious pleasure of braving public opinion and good

sense. It is the darling sin of the powers of this world to be taken with bizarre caprices. Why should not the Academy indulge in whims just as much as the Grand Turk or a pretty woman?

"Many opposite passions unite to inspire these unfortunate selections which vex simple souls. It is a pleasure for good people to take an unfortunate mortal and make an academician of him. Thus the God of the psalmist takes the poor man from his dunghill. *Erigens de stercore pauperem, ut collocet eum cum principibus, cum principibus populi sui.* These are strokes which astonish the nations and those who deal them must think themselves armed with a mysterious force and terrible power. And what pleasure to drag the poor soul from his dunghill, while leaving, meanwhile, some intellectual despot in the shade! It is to quaff, at a draught, a rare and delicious mixture of charity fulfilled and jealousy satisfied. It is enjoyment in every sense and content for the whole man. And you want the academicians to resist the sweetness of such a philtre!

"We must take into consideration again, that in procuring for themselves this very sophisticated pleasure, the academicians act for the best in their own interests. A society formed exclusively of

great men would not be numerous, and would appear rather depressing.

"Great men cannot endure one another, and they have little wit. It is good to let them mix with smaller fry. It amuses them. The small fry benefit by their neighbourhood, the great by the comparison with the small, and there is profit for both one and the other. Let us admire by what skilful play, what ingenious contrivance, the *Académie Française* passes on to some of its members the importance it gains from others. It is a collection of suns and planets, where all shine with their own or with a borrowed effulgence.

"I go even further. Unfortunate selections are necessary to the existence of this society. If, in the elections, the Academy did not take the side of weakness and error, if it did not have the air of choosing haphazardly at times, it would make itself so hated by all that it could no longer continue to exist. In the republic of letters it would be as a tribunal set in the midst of condemned men. Infallible, it would appear odious. What an affront for those who were not chosen, were the elected one always the best! The daughter of Richelieu must seem a little volatile, so as not to appear too insolent. What saves her is that she takes fancies. Her in-

justice proves her innocence. It is because we know her capricious that she can reject us without wounding us. It is sometimes so advantageous to her to deceive herself that I am tempted to believe, notwithstanding appearances, that she does it on purpose. She has admirable ruses for dealing tactfully with the self-love of the candidates she sets aside. An election of such a kind disarms envy. It is in her apparent faults that you must admire her true wisdom."

XIV

SEDITION-MONGERS

MY good master and I having paid our accustomed visit at the sign of the *Image de Sainte Catherine,* we found in the shop the famous Mr. Rockstrong, mounted on the highest rung of the ladder ferreting out the old books, of which he is a connoisseur. For it pleases him, as is well known, in his troubled existence to collect precious books and fine prints.

Condemned by the English Parliament to imprisonment for life for taking part in Monmouth's Rebellion, he lives in France, whence he is continually sending articles to the gazettes of his country.*

My good master, as his habit was, let himself down on to a stool, then raised his eyes to the ladder where Mr. Rockstrong was turning about with the squirrel-like agility he has preserved in his declining years.

* I have not found this Mr. Rockstrong mentioned in the memoirs relating to Monmouth's Rebellion. (ANATOLE FRANCE.)

"God be thanked!" said he, "I see, *Monsieur le Rebelle,* you are as well and as young as ever."

Mr. Rockstrong turned on my good master the glowing eyes that light up his sallow countenance.

"Why do you call me a rebel?" he asked, "you fat Abbé!"

"I call you a rebel, Mr. Rockstrong, because you have failed. One is a rebel when one is vanquished. Victors are never rebels."

"Abbé, you speak with a disgusting cynicism."

"Beware, Mr. Rockstrong; that maxim does not come from me. It comes from a very great man. I found it among the papers of Julius Cæsar Scaliger."

"Well, Abbé, those are villainous papers. And it is an infamous saying. Our loss, due to the irresolution of our chief, and to an indolence which he paid for with his life, does not alter the goodness of our cause. And honest people conquered by rogues, remain honest people."

"It pains me to hear you talk of honest people and rogues, in public matters, Mr. Rockstrong. These simple expressions might suffice to indicate the good and the bad side in those combats of angels which were fought in Heaven before the creation

of the world; and which your fellow countryman, John Milton, has sung with very great barbarity. But, on this terraqueous globe, camps are not, however desirable it might be, so equally divided that one can discriminate, without prejudice or compliance, between the army of the pure and the impure; nor even distinguish the side of the just from the unjust. So that, success must necessarily remain the only witness to the goodness of a cause. I annoy you, Mr. Rockstrong, by telling you that one is rebel when one is vanquished. Yet when it happens to you to climb to power, you will not suffer rebellion."

"Abbé, you do not know what you are saying. I have always hastened to the side of the vanquished."

"Truly, Mr. Rockstrong, you are a natural and constant enemy of the State. You are hardened in your enmity by the force of your genius, which finds pleasure in destruction and ruin."

"Abbé, do you call me a criminal?"

"Mr. Rockstrong, if I were a statesman, or a friend of the prince, like Monsieur Roman, I should take you for a remarkable criminal. But I am not a sufficiently fervent believer in the religion of

politics to be very terrified at the murmur of your crimes, or of outrages which make more noise than they do harm."

"Abbé, you are immoral!"

"If it be only at such a price one can afford to be indulgent, Mr. Rockstrong, do not blame me too severely."

"I have no use, my fat Abbé, for an indulgence that you share between me, the victim, and the scoundrels in Parliament, who condemned me with such revolting injustice."

"It is amusing to hear you talk of the injustice of the lords, Mr. Rockstrong."

"Is it not a crying injustice?"

"It is quite true, Mr. Rockstrong, that you were convicted, on a ridiculous charge, by the Lord-Chancellor for a collection of libels, none of which came in particular under the ban of the English law; it is true that in a country where one is allowed to write anything and everything, you were punished for some pungent writings; it is true that they used, as weapons, obsolete and out-of-the-way forms whose imposing hypocrisy poorly dissimulated the impossibility of getting at you by legal methods; it is true that the milords who judged you were interested in your ruin, since Monmouth's, and your

success would infallibly have dragged them from their seats. It is true your ruin was decided on beforehand in the royal Councils. It is true you escaped by flight, from a mediocre kind of martyrdom in truth, but a painful one. For imprisonment for life is a penalty even if one may reasonably hope to escape from it soon. But there is no justice nor injustice there. You were condemned for State reasons—which is extremely honourable. And more than one of the lords who condemned you had conspired with you twenty years before. Your crime was to have frightened those in office—and it is an unpardonable one. Ministers and their friends invoke the safety of the State when danger threatens their fortunes or their posts. And they are willing to believe themselves necessary for the preservation of the empire, for they are for the most part interested parties and no philosophers. But that does not make bad men of them. They are human beings and that is quite enough to explain their pitiable mediocrity, their stupidity and their avarice. But whom do you set up against them, Mr. Rockstrong? Other men of equal mediocrity, and yet more greedy, because they are hungrier. The people of London would have borne with them as they bear with the others. They

awaited your victory or your defeat to declare themselves, wherein they gave proof of remarkable sagacity. The people are well advised when they judge that they have nothing to gain or lose by change of masters."

Thus spoke Abbé Coignard, and Mr. Rockstrong with inflamed countenance, eyes on fire, and wig starting from his head, shouted at him with gestures from the top of his ladder: "Abbé, I understand thieves and all types of rogues in Chancery and Parliament. But I do not understand you, who, without any personal interest in the matter, out of pure malice, propound maxims that they themselves profess but for their own profit. You must be wickeder than they, for you have nothing to gain in the matter. It is beyond me, Abbé!"

"It is a sign of my being a philosopher," gently replied my good master. "It is in the nature of wise men to irritate the rest of mankind. Anaxagoras was a celebrated example of it. I do not speak of Socrates who was but a sophist. But we see that in all times and in all countries the opinions of meditative minds were subjects of scandal. You think yourself very different from your enemies, Mr. Rockstrong, and that you are as lovable as they are odious. Allow me to tell you that this is but the

effect of your pride and of your high courage. In actual fact, you share in common with those who condemned you, all human weaknesses and passions. If you are more honest than many of them, and even if you are a man of incomparable vivacity of mind, you are filled with a talent for hatred and discord which renders you very inconvenient in a well-regulated country. The calling of a journalist, in which you excel, has raised to the highest degree of perfection the wonderful partiality of your mind, and though a victim of injustice, you are yourself not just. What I have just said embroils me both with you and with your enemies, and I am very certain I shall never obtain a fat living from the minister who has them in his gift. But I prize freedom of mind more highly than a fat abbey or a cosy priory. I shall have succeeded in vexing all the world, but I shall die in peace, and in contentment of heart."

"Abbé," half-laughingly, replied Mr. Rockstrong, "I forgive you, because I think you a little mad. You make no difference between rogues and honest men, and you would not rather have a free country than a despotic and shuffling government. You are a lunatic, and of no ordinary kind."

"Let us go and drink a pot of wine at the *Petit Bacchus,* Mr. Rockstrong," said my good master,

"and I will explain to you, while emptying my glass, why I am totally indifferent to forms of government, and why I do not trouble myself about any change of masters."

"Very willingly," said Mr. Rockstrong, "I shall be interested to drink in company with such a bad arguer as you."

He sprang lightly down from his ladder, and we all three repaired to the inn.

XV

REVOLUTIONARY MEASURES

MR. ROCKSTRONG, who was a sensible man, bore my good master no malice for his sincerity of speech. When the landlord of the *Petit Bacchus* had brought a pot of wine, the pamphleteer lifted his glass and drank to Abbé Coignard's health, calling him a rogue, a friend of robbers, a tool of tyrants and on old scamp! all with quite a jovial air.

My master returned his compliments with a good grace, congratulating him on the fact that he drank to a man whose natural humour had remained unaffected by philosophy.

"As for myself," he added, "I feel that my intelligence is quite spoilt by reflection. And as it is not in the nature of mankind to think with any profundity, I own that my leaning to thought is an odd mania and highly inconvenient. In the first place it makes me unfit for any undertaking, for our actions result from a limited outlook and narrow way of thinking. You will be astonished, Mr. Rockstrong,

if you picture to yourself the simple-mindedness of the men of genius who have stirred the world. Conquerors and statesmen, who have changed the face of the earth, have never reflected on the essence of the beings they handled so roughly. They shut themselves up altogether in the pettiness of their grand projects and the wisest see but very few things at a time. Such as you see me, Mr. Rockstrong, it would be impossible for me to work like Alexander at the conquest of India, or to found and govern an empire, or, generally speaking, to throw myself into any one of those vast undertakings which tempt the pride of the impetuous. Reflection would hamper me, from the outset, and I should find reasons for coming to a stop at every move I made."

Then turning to me my good master said sighing.

"Thought is a great infirmity, God keep you from it Tournebroche, my son, as He has kept His greatest saints, and the souls for whom He cherishes a singular predilection, and for whom He reserves eternal glory. Men who think little, or who think not at all, go about their business happily in this world and the next, whilst the meditative soul is incessantly menaced with its temporal and spiritual loss. Such malice lies in thought! Reflect and

tremble, my son, at the thought that the serpent of Genesis is the oldest of philosophers and their everlasting prince."

Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard drank a great draught of wine and went on in a low voice:

"As regards my salvation, that is a subject to which I have never applied my intelligence. I have never exercised my reason on the truths of the Faith. Unhappily, I have meditated the deeds of men and the ways of cities; therefore I am no longer fit to govern an Island, as was Sancho Panza."

"That is a very good thing," retorted Mr. Rockstrong, laughingly, "for your isle would be a retreat for bandits and vagabonds where the criminal would judge the innocent, if perchance there were any."

"I well believe it! Mr. Rockstrong, I well believe it!" answered my good master! "It is quite possible that, if I were to govern another island of Barataria, manners would be as you say. With one stroke you have depicted all the empires of the world. I feel that mine would be no better than the rest. I have no illusions about mankind, and, so as not to hate them, I despise them. I despise and pity them, Mr. Rockstrong. But they bear me no goodwill for it. They want to be hated. One vexes them when one shows them the gentlest, the most in-

dulgent, the most charitable, most human and gracious of all feelings that they could inspire: contempt. Nevertheless, mutual contempt means peace on earth, and if men would only thoroughly despise one another they would do themselves no further harm and live together in an amiable tranquillity.

"All the ills of civilised societies originate in people thinking too highly of each other, and raising honour, like a monster, above the wretchedness of the flesh and the spirit. This feeling makes them both proud and cruel, and I detest the pride that wants honour to be shown to it and to others, as if any one descended from Adam could be worthy of honour! An animal which eats, drinks (give me something to drink), and makes love, is worthy of pity, interesting perhaps, even sometimes pleasant and agreeable.

"He can only be honourable by the effect of a most absurd and headstrong prejudice in his favour. This prejudice is the source of all the ills from which we suffer. It is a detestable kind of idolatry. And to assure to humanity a sweetening of their existence you must begin by recalling them to their natural humility.

"They will be happy, when, brought back again

to a true appreciation of their condition, they despise one another without there being a single exception to this most excellent contempt."

Mr. Rockstrong shrugged his shoulders.

"My fat Abbé," said he, "you are a pig."

"I am but a man," replied my master, "you flatter me, and I feel in me the germs of that bitter pride that I detest, and that vain-glory which leads the human race into duels and into war. There are times, Mr. Rockstrong, when I would have my throat cut for my opinions; which would be an act of madness. For who can prove that I reason better than you, you, who reason excessively badly! Give me something to drink!"

Mr. Rockstrong courteously filled my good master's glass.

"Abbé, you talk nonsense," he said, "but I love you, and I should much like to know what you find blameworthy in my public behaviour, and why you side against me with tyrants, forgers, thieves, and dishonest judges?"

"Mr. Rockstrong, allow me first of all to diffuse over you and your friends, with a sweet impartiality, that single sentiment which gently puts an end to quarrels, and brings pacification. Bear with me if I respect neither the one nor the other enough to con-

sign them to the vengeance of the law and to call down punishment on their heads. Men, whatsoever they do, are always silly sheep, and I leave to milord-chancellor, who condemned you, the Ciceronian declamations on state crimes. I have little taste for Catiline orations from whichever side they come. I am merely sad to see a man like you occupied in changing forms of government. It is the most frivolous and empty method of using one's intelligence, and to fight people in office is folly, unless it is a way of earning one's bread and getting on in the world. Give me something to drink! Bethink you, Mr. Rockstrong, that these startling changes in the State, meditated by you, are merely displacements of particular men, and that men taken in the mass are one like another, average in evil as well as in good; so that to replace two or three hundred ministers, governors of provinces, colonial agents, and bonneted presidents of courts, by two or three hundred others, is as good as doing nothing, and is simply putting Philip and Barnabas in place of Paul and Xavier. As to changing the condition of people at the same time, as you hope to do, that is quite impossible, for that condition does not depend on the ministers, who count for nothing, but on the earth and its fruits, industry, commerce, money

amassed in the kingdom, the cleverness of the townfolk in trade and exchange—all things, which be they good or bad, are not kept going by either the prince or the officers of the crown."

Mr. Rockstrong quickly interrupted my good master:

"Who does not know," he exclaimed, "that the condition of industry and commerce depends on the government, and that only under a free government can you have good finance?"

"Liberty," continued Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard, is but the result of the wealth of citizens, who free themselves as soon as they are powerful enough to be independent. People take all the liberty they can enjoy, or, to put it more plainly, they imperiously clamour for institutions in recognition and guarantee of the rights which they have acquired by their industry.

"All liberty emanates from them and their several actions. Their most involuntary movements enlarge the mould of the state which shapes itself on them.*

* In the time of Abbé Coignard the French already thought themselves free. The sieur d'Alquié wrote in 1670:

"Three things make a man happy in this world, to know the charm of intercourse, dainty meats, and liberty, perfect and

"So that one may say that detestable as tyranny is, every tyranny is necessary, and despotic governments are but the strait-waistcoat on a feeble and dwindled body. And who does not see that the outward appearance of government is like the skin which reveals the structure of an animal without being the cause of it?

"You seize hold upon the skin without troubling yourself about the viscera, in which you show little natural philosophy, Mr. Rockstrong."

"So you make no difference between a free state and a tyrannical government, and all that you re-

entire. We have seen in what way our illustrious kingdom has fulfilled the two first, so it remains for us merely to show that the third is not lacking to it, and that liberty is no less a fact than the two preceding advantages. The thing will appear true to you if, to start with, you will consider attentively the name of our state, the matter of its foundation, and its usual customs: for one sees at the start that the name of *France* means nothing else than *Franchise* or liberty, conformably to the designs of the founders of this monarch, who, having noble and generous souls, and being unable to bear either slavery or the least servitude, resolved among themselves to throw off the yoke of all kinds of captivity and to be as free as men may be; this is why they came to the land of the Gauls, which was a country whose people were neither less warlike nor less jealous of their *Franchise* or liberty than they themselves were. As to the second point, we know that beyond the inclinations and plans they had in founding this state, they were always their own masters; they made laws for

gard as nothing but the hide of the beast, my fat Abbé. And you fail to see that the expenditure of the prince and the depredations of ministers can ruin agriculture and wear out trade by raising the taxes."

"Mr. Rockstrong, there cannot be at the same period and for the same country more than one possible form of government, any more than an animal can have more than one pelt at a time. From which it results, that we must leave to the care of Time, who is a courtly person, the changing of empires and the remaking of laws. He works at it slowly, untiringly, and kindly."

their sovereign which, limiting their powers, still preserved their privileges to them, in such wise that if anyone wishes to deprive them of them, they become enraged and rush to arms with such speed that nothing can hold them back when this point is involved. As to the third point, I declare that France is so enamoured of liberty that she cannot endure a slave, so that Turks and Moors and still less Christian people, may never wear irons nor be loaded with chains once in her country, and thus it comes about, that when slaves come to be in France they are no sooner on her territory than, full of joy, they cry: Long live France and her belovéd liberty!"

Les delices de la France . . . by François Savinien d'Alquié, Amsterdam 1670.

Chapter XVI. entitled "France is a land of freedom for all sorts of people."

"And you don't think, my fat Abbé, that we ought to help the old man who figures on the clocks with a scythe in his hand? You do not believe that a revolution, such as that of the English or that in the Low Countries, can have any effect on the condition of the people. No? You old idiot! you deserve to be crowned with a fool's cap!"

"Revolutions come about in conservation of good things already acquired, and not to gain new. It is the folly of nations, it is your own, Mr. Rockstrong, to found great hopes on the downfall of princes. People assure unto themselves, by revolting from time to time, the preservation of their threatened liberties. They have never gained new liberties thereby. But they are fooled with words. It is remarkable, Mr. Rockstrong, that men will easily let themselves be killed for words of no meaning. Ajax made the remark long ago: 'I thought in my youth' the poet makes him say, 'that deeds were more powerful than words, but I see to-day that the word is the stronger of the two.' Thus said Ajax, son of Oileus. Mr. Rockstrong, I am very thirsty!"

XVI

HISTORY

ONSIEUR ROMAN placed half a dozen volumes on the counter.

"I beg of you, Monsieur Blaizot," said he, "to send me these books.

"There are 'Mother and Son,' the 'Memoirs of the Court of France,' and the 'Testament of Richelieu.' I should be grateful if you will add to them anything new you have received lately in the way of history, and more particularly, anything treating of France since the death of Henry IV. . . . All these are works in which I am extremely interested."

"You are right, Monsieur," said my master. "Books on history are full of light stuff very suitable to amuse an honest fellow, and one is sure of finding a great number of pleasant stories."

"Monsieur l'Abbé," answered Monsieur Roman, "what I look for from the historians is not frivolous amusement. It is a serious study, and I am filled with despair if I find fiction mingled with fact. I study human actions in relation to the conduct of na-

tions, and I seek for maxims of government in history."

"I am not ignorant of that, Monsieur," said my good master. "Your treatise on 'Monarchy' is renowned enough for us to know that you have conceived a political system drawn from history."

"In such sort," said Monsieur Roman, "I have been the first to draw rules for princes and ministers which they cannot avoid without danger."

"And we behold you, Monsieur, on the frontispiece of your book, in the likeness of Minerva, presenting to a youthful king the mirror handed you by the muse, Clio, hovering above your head, in a study decked with busts and pictures. But allow me to tell you, Monsieur, that this nurse is a story-teller, and that she holds out to you a mirror of falsehood. There are few truths in history, and the only facts on which all agree are those we get from a single source. Historians contradict one another every time they meet. Even more! We see that Flavius Josephus, who has portrayed the same incidents in his 'Antiquities' and in his 'Wars of the Jews,' records them differently in each of these works. Titus Livius is but a collector of fables; and Tacitus, your oracle, gives me the impression of an unsmiling deceiver who flouts all the world under a pretence of

gravity. I have a sufficient esteem for Thucydides, Polybius, and Guicciardini. As for our own Mézeray, he does not know what he is saying, any more than do Villaret and Abbé Vély. But I am accusing historians; it is history itself I should attack.

"What is history? A miscellany of moral tales, or an eloquent medley of narratives and speeches, according as the historian is a philosopher or a spouter. You may find eloquent passages, but one must not look for the truth there, because truth consists in showing the necessary relation of things, and the historian does not know how to establish this relation, because he is unable to follow the chain of effects and causes. Consider that every time that the cause of an historical fact lies in a fact that is not historical, history fails to see it. And as historical facts are intimately allied to non-historical facts, it comes about that events are not linked after their natural order in history, but are connected one with another by mere artifices of rhetoric. And I ask you also to notice that the distinction between facts which appear in history and facts which do not is entirely arbitrary. It results from this that, far from being a science, history is condemned by a vice in its essence to the chaos of untruth. Sequence and continuity will always be lacking to it, and without these

there can be no true knowledge. You see also that one can draw no prognostic as to the future of a nation from its past history. Now, the peculiarity of science is to be prophetic, as may be seen by those tables where the moon's periods, tides, and eclipses are to be found calculated beforehand, whilst revolutions and wars escape calculation."

Monsieur Roman explained to Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard that he merely asked of history facts, somewhat confused it is true, uncertain, mingled with errors, but infinitely precious, through their subject, which is man.

"I know," he added, "how human annals are curtailed and mixed with fable. But, though a strict sequence of cause and effect fails us, I see in it a kind of plan that one loses and then finds again, like the ruins of temples half-buried in the sand. That alone is of immense value to me. And I flatter myself that, in the future, history, formed from abundant material and treated with method, will rival in exactitude the natural sciences."

"Do not reckon on that," said my good master, "I should rather believe that the growing abundance of memoirs, correspondence, and filed records, will render the task more difficult to future historians. Mr. Elward, who gives up his life to the

study of the revolution in England, assures me that one man's lifetime would not suffice in which to read the half of what was written during the disturbances. It reminds me of a story told to me by Monsieur l'Abbé Blanchet on this subject, which I will tell you as I remember it, regretting that Monsieur l'Abbé Blanchet is not here to tell it you himself, for he is a man of wit.

"Here is the apologue:

"When the young prince Zémire succeeded his father on the throne of Persia, he called all the academicians of his kingdom together, and said:

" 'The learned Zeb, my instructor, has taught me that monarchs would be liable to fewer errors if they were enlightened by past experience. Therefore I wish to study the history of nations. I order you to compose a universal history and to neglect nothing to make it complete.'

"The wise men promised to carry out the prince's desire, and having withdrawn they set to work immediately. At the end of twenty years they appeared before the king, followed by a caravan composed of twelve camels each bearing 500 volumes. The secretary of the academy, having prostrated himself on the steps of the throne, spoke in these terms:

" 'Sire, the academicians of your kingdom have the honour to place at your feet the universal history that they have compiled at your majesty's behests. It comprises 6000 volumes and contains all that we could possibly collect regarding the customs of nations and the vicissitudes of empires. We have inserted the ancient chronicles which have been luckily preserved, and we have illustrated them with abundant notes on geography, chronology, and diplomacy. The prolegomena are alone one camel's load, and the paralipomena are borne with great difficulty by another camel.'

"The king answered:

" 'Gentlemen, I thank you for the trouble that you have taken. But I am very busy with the cares of state. Moreover, I have aged while you worked. I am arrived, as says the Persian poet, half-way along the road of life, and even supposing I die full of years, I cannot reasonably hope to have the time to read such a lengthy history. It shall be placed in the archives of the kingdom. Be good enough to make me a summary better fitted to the brevity of human life.'

"The Persian academicians worked twenty years; then they brought to the king 1500 volumes on three camels.

" 'Sire,' said the permanent secretary, in a weakened voice, 'here is our new work. We believe we have omitted nothing essential.'

" 'That may be,' answered the king, 'but I shall not read it. I am old; lengthy undertakings do not suit my years; abridge it further and do not be long about it.'

"They lingered so little that at the end of ten years they returned followed by a young elephant bearing 500 volumes.

" 'I flatter myself I have been succinct,' said the permanent secretary.

" 'You have not yet been sufficiently so,' answered the king.

" 'I am at the end of my life. Abridge, abridge, if you want me to know the history of mankind ere I die.'

"The permanent secretary reappeared before the palace at the end of five years. Walking with crutches, he held by the bridle a small donkey which bore a big book on its back.

" 'Hasten,' said the officer to him, 'the king is dying.'

"The king in fact was on his death-bed. He turned on the academician and his big book his nearly expiring gaze, and said with a sigh:

" 'I shall die, then, without knowing the history of mankind!'

" 'Sire,' replied the learned man, who was almost as near death as himself, 'I will sum it up for you in three words: *They were born, they suffered, they died!*'

"Thus did the king of Persia learn the history of the world in the evening of his life."

XVII

MONSIEUR NICODEME

HILE, at the sign of the *Image de Sainte Catherine,* my good master, seated on the highest rung of the ladder, was reading Cassiodorus with great pleasure, an elderly man came into the shop, of an arrogant air, and severe aspect. He went straight to Monsieur Blaizot, who smilingly stretched his head over the counter.

"Monsieur," he said, "you are sworn bookseller, and I must take you for a well-conducted man. Nevertheless, in your display of goods a volume of the works of Ronsard is open at the frontispiece, which represents a naked woman. And it is a thing not fit to be looked at."

"Pardon me, Monsieur," replied Monsieur Blaizot, gently, "it is a frontispiece of Léonard Gautier's who, in his day, was considered a very able draughtsman."

"It matters little to me," replied the elder, "that the draughtsman was clever. All that I take into consideration is that he represented nudities. This

figure has nothing on but its hair, and I am grievously surprised, Monsieur, that a man of age and prudence, such as you appear, should expose it to the gaze of the young men who frequent the Rue St. Jacques. You would do well to burn it, following the example of Father Garasse, who expended his means in acquiring, in order to burn them, a number of books opposed to public decency and to the Society of Jesus. At least, it would be more decent in you to hide it in the most secret recess of your shop, which conceals, I fear, many a book calculated to excite minds to vice, not only by their text, but by their plates."

Monsieur Blaizot replied, reddening, that such a suspicion was unjust, and it grieved him coming from a worthy man.

"I must tell you who I am," said the elder. "You see before you Monsieur Nicodème, the President of the Purity League. The end that I pursue is to outdo in niceness in the manner of modesty the regulations of the *Lieutenant de Police.* I busy myself, with the help of a dozen Parliamentary councillors, and two hundred churchwardens from the principal parishes, in clearing away nudities exposed in public places, such as squares, boulevards, streets, alleys, quays, courts, and gardens. And, not

content with establishing modesty in the public way, I exert myself to spread its dominion even into the salon, the study, and the bedroom, whence it is but too often banished. Know, Monsieur, that the Society that I have founded has trousseaux made for young married people, containing long and ample night-garments which permit these young spouses chastely to go about the execution of God's commandment relative to increase and multiplication. And, to mingle charm, if I may say so, with austerity, these garments are trimmed with pleasing embroidery. I plume myself on having thus invented garments of an intimate nature so well designed to make another Sarah and Tobias of all our young couples, and to cleanse the sacrament of marriage from the impurities which unfortunately have clung to it."

My good master, who, his nose in Cassiodorus, had been listening to their discourse, replied with the utmost gravity from the top of his ladder, that he thought the invention admirable, and praiseworthy, but that he had a still more excellent one of the kind.

"I would that our young spouses," said he, "were rubbed from head to foot with blacking before they met, making their skin like boot-leather,

which would greatly damp the criminal ardours of the flesh, and be a grievous obstacle to the caresses, kisses, and endearments that lovers practise too generally between the sheets."

Monsieur Nicodème, lifting his head at these words, saw my good master on the ladder, and saw also from his demeanour that he was laughing at him.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said he, with sadness and indignation, "I would forgive you did you merely laugh at me. But you ridicule at the same time, decency and public morals, and there you are much to blame. In spite of wicked jokes, the Society that I have founded has already done good and useful work. Crack your jokes, sir! We have fixed six hundred vine or fig-leaves on the statues in the king's gardens."

"Admirable indeed, sir," responded my good master, adjusting his spectacles, "and at that rate every statue will soon have its leaf. But (seeing that objects have no meaning for us save by association of ideas) in placing vine-leaves and fig-leaves on statues, you transfer the quality of indecency to the leaves; so that one can no longer see vine or fig-tree on the countryside without conceiving them as sheltering some indecency; and it is no small sin,

my good sir, to fix immodesty on these innocent plants. Allow me to tell you further that it is a dangerous thing to make a study, as you do, of everything that may cause disquietude and uneasiness to the flesh, without reflecting that if a given shape be such as to scandalise souls, each of us who bears the original of that shape will scandalise himself, except he be less than a man—a thing one does not like to contemplate."

"Monsieur," responded the aged Nicodème, rather heatedly, "I gather from the language you hold that you are a libertine and a debauchee."

"Monsieur," said my good master, "I am a Christian, and as for living in debauchery, I could not think of such a thing, having enough to do to gain my daily bread, wine, and tobacco. Such as you see me, Monsieur, I know no orgy but the silent orgies of meditation, and the only feast I sit down to is the feast of the Muses. But I, as a wise man, consider that it is a bad thing to outbid in shamefacedness the teachings of the Catholic religion, which on this subject allows a good deal of liberty, and adjusts itself easily to people's customs and prejudices. I take you to be tainted with Calvinism and to be leaning to the heresy of iconoclasm. For, in truth, one does not know whether your zeal

will not go so far as to burn images of God and the saints, from hatred of the humanity evident in them. Such words as modesty, decency, and shame, which come so readily from your mouth, have as a matter of fact no precise and constant meaning. Custom and nice feeling can alone define them with truth and moderation. I only acknowledge poets, artists, and pretty women, as judges in these delicate matters. What an extraordinary notion, to set up a row of attorneys in judgment on Grace and Pleasure!"

"But, Monsieur," replied the aged Nicodème, "we have nothing to do with Smiles or Graces, still less with images of God and the saints, and you are maliciously fastening a quarrel on us. We are decent people, who wish to turn aside the eyes of our sons from improper sights, and one knows well enough what is decent and what is not. Do you wish, Monsieur l'Abbé, that our young people should be open to every temptation of the streets?"

"Ah! Monsieur," replied my good master. "We must all be tempted. It is the lot of men and Christians on this earth. And the most formidable temptation comes from within—not from without. You would not take so much trouble to remove

from the shop windows any sketch of nude women if, as I have done, you had studied the lives of the Fathers of the desert. There you would have seen how, in a frightful wilderness, far from any carved or painted shape, torn with hair-shirts, macerated with penance, faint from fasting, tossing on a bed of thorns, the anchorites were penetrated to the very marrow with the prickings of carnal desire. In their wretched cells they saw visions a thousand times more voluptuous than this allegory which offends you in Monsieur Blaizot's window.

"The devil, or, as free-thinkers would say, nature, is a better painter of lascivious scenes than Giulio Romano himself. He surpasses all the Italian and Flemish masters in grouping, movement, and colour. Alas! one is powerless against his glowing pictures. Those that shock you are of small account in comparison, and you would do wisely to leave to the care of the *Lieutenant de Police,* as your fellow citizens are willing it should be left, the guardianship of public decency. Truly your ingenuousness astonishes me; you have little notion what a man is, and what society is, and of the fever and insurgence of a great city. Oh! the silly grey-beards, who in the midst of all the uncleanness of a Babylon

where every lifted curtain shows the eye or the arm of a courtesan, where busy humanity touch and quicken one another in the public squares, fall a-groaning and complaining of a few naughty pictures hung up on booksellers' stalls; and carry their lamentations even to the very Parliament of the kingdom when a woman has shown her legs to some fellows in a dancing-saloon—just the most ordinary sight in the world for them."

Thus spoke my good master from the top of his ladder. But Monsieur Nicodème stopped his ears in order not to hear him, and cried out on his cynicism.

"Heavens!" he sighed, "what can be more disgusting than a naked woman, and how shameful to compromise, as does this Abbé, with an immorality which is the ruin of a country, for people can only exist by purity of morals."

"It is true, Monsieur," said my good master, "that peoples are strong only so long as they preserve their morals; but by that is understood a community of rules, opinions, and interests, and a generous-minded obedience to law; not trifles such as occupy you. Beware, moreover, lest shamefacedness, failing as a charm, become but a piece of stupidity, and less the artless dullness of your fears

present a ridiculous spectacle and one not a little indecent."

But Monsieur Nicodème had already left the place.

XVIII

JUSTICE

MONSIEUR L'ABBE COIGNARD, who should rather have been nourished at the Prytaneum by a grateful republic, gained his bread by writing letters for servant-girls in a stall near the cemetery of the Innocents. There he happened to serve in the office of secretary to a Portuguese lady who was crossing France, with her nigger-boy. She gave him a *liard* for a letter written to her husband, and an *écu* of six *livres* for another to her lover. It was the first *écu* my good master had handled since the feast of St. John; and since he was openhanded, even to magnificence, he straightway took me to the *Pomme d'Or,* on the Quai de Grève, close to the Town-hall, where the wine is not doctored, and the sausages are of the best. And the big dealers, who buy apples on the Mall, go there ordinarily towards midday to try to best one another. It was springtime, and sweet to be alive on such a day. My good master had our table spread on the embankment, and we hearkened, as we dined,

to the lapping of the water under the oars of the boatmen. A light caressing breeze laved us with gentle breath, and we were glad to be alive and in the sunlight. While we were eating our fried gudgeons a noise of men and horses at our elbow made us turn round.

Guessing what made us curious a dingy little old man, at the next table, said, with an obliging smile:

"It is nothing, gentlemen—a servant-girl whom they are taking to be hanged for stealing some bits of lace from her mistress."

And indeed, as he spoke, we saw, seated at the tail of a cart between two mounted police-sergeants, a girl, quite pretty, her appearance bewildered, her bosom forced into relief by the drag of her arms, which were bound behind her back. She passed in a moment, and yet I shall always see before my eyes that vision of a white face, and that look that already stared out upon nothing.

"Yes, gentlemen," said the dingy little old man, "she is the servant of Madame Josse, the councillor's wife, and to make herself smart when going with her lover to Ramponneau's stole from her mistress a lace head-dress in *point a'Alençon,* and then, having committed the theft, ran away. She was taken in a house by the Pont-au-Change, and at once

confessed her crime. Accordingly she was not put to the torture for more than an hour or two. What I tell you, gentlemen, I know to be true, as I am beadle at the court where she was tried."

The dingy little old man attacked his sausage, for it was getting cold, and continued:

"She should be at the scaffold by now, and in five minutes, perhaps a little more, perhaps a little less, the pretty rogue will have given up the ghost. Some of the hanged give no trouble to the executioner. No sooner is the cord round their neck than they quietly expire. But there are others who positively live at the rope's end, and make a furious to-do about it. The most demoniacal of all was a priest, who was sentenced last year for forging the Royal signature on lottery tickets. For more than twenty minutes he fought like a carp on the end of a line.

"He! He!" chuckled the little old man, "the Abbé was modest and did not want the honour of a step up in the world. I saw him when they took him out of the cart. He cried and struggled so that the hangman said to him: 'Do not be a child, Monsieur l'Abbé!' But the oddest thing was, that, there being another thief along with him, he was, at first, taken for the chaplain, and that by the execu-

tioner, whom the police-officer had the greatest difficulty in undeceiving. Wasn't that amusing?"

"No, Monsieur," replied my good master, letting the fish, he had held to his lips for some moments, fall on his plate. "No, it is not amusing, and the thought that that nice-looking girl is at this moment yielding up her soul spoils the taste of my gudgeons for me, and the joy of seeing the sky above, which smiled on me but a moment back."

"Ah, Monsieur l'Abbé," said the little official, "if you are so sensitive as all that, you could never have witnessed without fainting what my father saw with his own eyes, when yet a child, at Dijon, his native town. Have you ever heard speak of Hélène Gillet?"

"Never," said my master.

"In that case I will tell you her story, as my father, many a time, told it to me."

He drank off his wine, wiped his lips with a corner of the cloth, and recounted the history I here repeat.

XIX

THE BEADLE'S STORY

N the year 1624, in the month of October, Hélène Gillet, aged twenty-two, daughter of the governor-royal, of Bourg-en-Bresse, who was still under the paternal roof, along with her brothers yet of tender years, showed such visible signs of being with child that it was the talk of the town, and the young girls of Bourg ceased to associate with her. It was noticed next that her figure went down, and such comments were made that the *Lieutenant-Criminel* ordered her to be examined by a jury of matrons. These latter reported that she had been with child and that her confinement had taken place at least fifteen days before. On their report, Hélène Gillet was put in prison and was questioned by the Court of First Instance. She there made a confession:

" 'Some months ago,' she told them, 'a young man from the neighbourhood, who was staying at my uncle's house, came to my father's to teach the boys to read and write. He possessed me but once. It

was through a servant who locked me up in a room with him. There he ravished me.' And when they asked her why she had not cried for help, she replied that surprise had taken away her voice. Pressed by the judges, she added, that in consequence of this violation she became with child and was delivered prematurely. Far from having helped on the birth, she would not have known what it was, had not a servant revealed to her the true nature of the occurrence.

"The magistrates, dissatisfied with her replies, did not know, all the same, how to contradict them, when an unexpected witness came forward to furnish certain proofs of the accusation. A soldier, who happened to pass when out walking by the garden of Monsieur Pierre Gillet, the governor-royal, father of the accused, saw in a ditch, at the foot of the wall, a raven trying to pull away a cloth with its beak. He went up to it to see what it was and found the body of a little child. He immediately informed the authorities. The child was wrapped in a chemise marked with the letters H. G. on the neck. It was proved to have been a full-term child, and Hélène Gillet, convicted of infanticide, was condemned to death according to custom. On account of the honourable post held by her father she was

permitted to enjoy the privilege accorded those of noble birth, and the sentence ran that her head should be cut off.

"An appeal having been made to the Parliament of Dijon, she was conducted under the guard of two archers to the capital of Burgundy, and shut in the conciergerie of the Palace. Her mother, who had gone with her, withdrew to the house of the Bernardine nuns. The case was heard by the members of Parliament on Monday the 12th of May, the last sitting before Whitsuntide. On the report of Counsellor Jacob the judges confirmed the sentence of the Bourg Court of First Instance, ordering that the condemned should be led to execution with the cord round her neck. It was generally remarked that this circumstance of infamy was added in a strange and unusual fashion to the punishment of a noble, and such severity, which was against all rules, was greatly blamed. But the decree was admitted of no appeal, and had to be carried out immediately.

"And indeed, on the same day, at half-past three in the afternoon, Hélène Gillet was led to the scaffold, the bells tolling the while, in a procession, heralded by trumpets, which sounded such a peal that all the good folk of the town heard it in their

houses, and falling on their knees prayed for the soul of her who was about to die. The deputy King's-attorney advanced on horseback followed by his attendants. Then came the condemned woman in a cart, the cord round her neck according to the decree of Parliament.

"She was attended by two Jesuit fathers and two Capuchin brothers, who held up before her Jesus dying on the Cross. Near by stood the headsman with his sword and the headswoman with a pair of shears. A company of archers surrounded the cart. Behind pressed a crowd of curious people where might have been discerned many small tradesmen, bakers, butchers, masons, from whom a great tumult arose.

"The procession stopped on the place called Place Morimont not, as might be thought, because it was the place of public execution, but in remembrance of the mitred and croziered abbots of Morimont, who formerly had their house there. The wooden scaffold was set up on some stone steps adjoining a humble chapel where the monks were wont to pray for the souls of the victims.

"Hélène Gillet ascended the steps with the four religious, the headsman, and his wife the headswoman. The latter, having withdrawn the cord

which encircled the victim's neck, cut her hair with shears half a foot long and bandaged her eyes; the religious prayed aloud. The headsman, however, began to tremble and turn pale. He was one, Simon Grandjean, a feeble-looking man, and as gentle and timorous of appearance as his wife, the headswoman, was savage. He had taken communion that morning in prison, and yet he felt upset and without courage to put this child to death. He leant over towards the crowd:

" 'Your pardon, all of you,' he said, 'if I do what I have to do badly. I have a fever on me I have been unable to shake off for three months.'

"Then tottering, wringing his hands, lifting his eyes to heaven, he fell on his knees before Hélène Gillet, and twice asked her pardon. He asked a blessing from the priests, and when the headswoman had arranged the victim on the block he lifted his sword.

"The Jesuits and the Capuchins cried out 'Jesus! Mary!' and a groan went up from the crowd. The blow, which should have severed the neck, made a large gash on the left shoulder, and the poor creature fell over on her right side.

"Simon Grandjean, turning to the crowd, exclaimed:

" 'Let me die!'

"Hooting arose, and some stones were thrown on the scaffold where the headswoman was replacing the victim on the block.

"Her husband again took his sword. Striking a second time, he deeply gashed the neck of the poor girl, who fell on the sword, which slipped from the hands of the executioner.

"This time the uproar from the crowd was terrible, and such a hail of stones showered on the scaffold that Simon Grandjean and the Jesuits and the Capuchins jumped down. They managed to gain the low-roofed chapel and shut themselves in. The headswoman, left alone with the victim, looked for the sword. Not seeing it, she took the cord with which Hélène Gillet had been led there, knotted it round the neck, and setting her foot on her chest tried to strangle her.

"Hélène, seizing the cord with both hands, defended herself, all bleeding as she was; whereupon the woman Grandjean dragged her by the cord, head downwards, to the edge of the platform, and, having got her to the stone steps, she cut her throat with the shears.

"She was at it when the butchers and the masons, upsetting the archers and the police, rushed the ap-

proaches of the scaffold and chapel: a dozen strong arms lifted Hélène Gillet and carried her, insensible, to the shop of Maître Jacquin, the barber-surgeon.

"The crowd of people which flung itself on the chapel-door would soon have forced it. But the two Capuchin brothers and the two Jesuit fathers opened it, being terrified. And holding up their crosses with outstretched arm, they made a way with great difficulty through the riot.

"The headsman and his wife were stoned, and struck down with hammers, and their bodies dragged through the streets. Hélène Gillet, however, recovering consciousness at the surgeon's, asked to drink. Then, while Maître Jacquin was dressing her wound, she said:

" 'Shall I not have anything more to suffer?'

"It was found that she had suffered two blows with the sword, six cuts from the shears, which had slashed her lips and throat, and that her loins had been deeply cut by the sword, over which the headswoman dragged her while trying to strangle her; and finally that her whole body was bruised by the stones the crowd had thrown on the scaffold.

"Nevertheless she was healed of all her wounds. Left in the hands of Jacquin the surgeon, under guard of a sheriff's officer, she asked continually:

"'Is it not over? Will they kill me?'

"The surgeon, and some charitable people who stood by her, were urgent in reassuring her. But only the king could grant her her life. Févret, the advocate, drew up a petition which was signed by many notables of Dijon, and carried to his Majesty. Festivities were being held at the court at that moment on account of the marriage of Henrietta-Maria of France with the King of Poland. On the score of this marriage, Louis the Just granted the favour asked.

"He gave a full pardon to the poor girl, deeming, as the letters of remission said, that she had suffered tortures which equalled, nay even surpassed, the penalty of her sentence.

"Hélène Gillet, restored to life, withdrew into a convent at Brest where she practised up to the time of her death, the strictest piety. Such," said the little official, "is the true history of Hélène Gillet, as every one in Dijon knows. Do you not find it entertaining, Monseur l'Abbé?"

XX

JUSTICE (*continued*)

"ALAS!" said my good master, "I cannot stomach my food. My heart is as sick at this horrible scene, which you have described so cold-bloodedly, sir, as at the sight of this servant of Madame Josse's whom they are taking to be hanged, when something better might be made of her."

"But, Monsieur," retorted the beadle, "have I not told you that this girl has stolen from her mistress; and do you not wish thieves to be hanged "

"Certainly," said my good master, "it is customary; and as the force of custom is irresistible, I pay no attention to it in my ordinary course of life. In the same way Seneca, the philosopher, who nevertheless inclined to mildness, put together treatises of consummate elegance, even while near to him, at Rome, slaves were crucified for the smallest fault, as we see in the case of the slave Mithridates, who died, his hands nailed to the cross; merely guilty of having blasphemed the divinity of his master, the infamous Trimalchio. We are so made that nothing

usual or customary either troubles or wounds us. And habit wears away, if I may say so, our indignation as well as our astonishment. I wake up every morning without thinking, I own, of the unhappy beings who are to be hanged or broken upon the wheel during the day. But when the thought of torture becomes more perceptible to me my heart is troubled, and the sight of this handsome girl led to her death contracts my throat to the point of refusing passage to this little fish."

"What is a handsome girl?" said the beadle. "There is not a street in Paris where they don't make them by the dozen every night. Why did this one steal from her mistress, Madame Josse?"

"I know nothing of that, Monsieur," gravely answered my good master, "you know nothing, and the judges who condemned her knew no more, for the reasons of our actions are obscure, and their springs remain deeply hidden. I hold man free as regards his deeds, as my religion teaches me to believe, but beyond the doctrine of the Church, which is sure, there is so little ground for believing in the freedom of mankind, that I tremble when I think of decrees of justice punishing actions whose mainspring, sequence, and causes, all equally escape us, where the will plays often but a small part, and

which are sometimes accomplished without consciousness. If, finally, we are responsible for our acts, since the system of our holy religion is founded on the mysterious accord between human free-will and divine grace, it is an error to deduce from this obscure and delicate liberty all the troubles, all the tortures, and all the suffering of which our laws are prodigal."

"I perceive with sorrow, Monsieur," said the dingy little man, "that you are on the side of the rogues."

"Alas! Monsieur," said my good master, "they are part of suffering humanity, and members like ourselves of Jesus Christ who died between two thieves. I seem to perceive cruelties in our laws which will appear more distinctly in the future, and over which our posterity will wax indignant."

"I do not agree with you, Monsieur," said the other, drinking a little gulp of wine. "All the gothic barbarity has been pared away from our laws and customs, and justice is to-day restrained and humane to excess. Punishment is exactly proportioned to crime, and you see thieves hanged, murderers broken on the wheel, traitors torn by four horses, atheists, sorcerers, and sodomites burnt, coiners boiled alive; in all which criminal law

exhibits extreme moderation and all possible mildness."

"Monsieur, in all times judges have believed themselves to be benevolent, equitable, and gentle. In the gothic ages of St. Louis, and even of Charlemagne, they admired their own benignity, which appears to us to-day as savage. I divine that, in their turn, our sons will judge us as savage, and that they will find still something more to pare away from the tortures and punishments which we inflict."

"Monsieur, you are not speaking as a magistrate. Torture is necessary to extract confessions unobtainable by gentle means. As to punishments, they are reduced to what is necessary to assure safety of their life and goods to citizens."

"You acknowledge then, Monsieur, that justice has for its object not what is just, but what is useful, and that it is inspired only by the interests and prejudices of peoples. Nothing is more true, and faults are punished not in proportion to the malice attached to them, but in view of the harm they cause, or which it is believed they cause, to society in general. Thus, coiners are put into a copper of boiling water, although, in reality, there is little malice in striking false coins. But the public, and

financiers in particular, suffer a marked damage therefrom. It is this loss for which they avenge themselves with pitiless cruelty. Thieves are hanged, less for the perversity that lies in taking bread, and clothes, which is, by the way, excessively small, than for the reason of the natural attachment men have for their possessions. It is expedient to restore human justice to its true reason—which is the material interest of men, and to disengage it from all high philosophy—with which it pompously and hypocritically veils itself."

"Monsieur," replied the little official, "I do not understand you. It appears to me that justice is the more equitable the more useful it is, and this usefulness itself, which makes you disdain it, ought to render it august and sacred to you."

"You do not understand me," said my good master."

"Monsieur," said the little official, "I notice that you are drinking nothing. Your wine is good if I may judge by the color of it. May I not taste it?"

It is true that for the first time in his life my good master had left some wine at the bottom of the bottle. He poured it into the little official's glass.

"Your health, Monsieur l'Abbé," said the beadle. "Your wine is good, but your arguments are worth-

less. Justice, I repeat, is the more equitable the more useful it is, and this usefulness itself, which, you say, is in its origin and foundation, should make it appear to you as august and sacred. But you must acknowledge that the essence of justice is to be *just,* as the word implies?"

"Monsieur," said my good master, "when we have called beauty beautiful, truth true, and justice just, we shall have said nothing at all. Your Ulpian, who spoke with precision, asserted that justice is the firm and perpetual desire to attribute to each what belongs to him, and that laws are just when they sanction this desire. The misfortune is, that men have nothing of their own, and thus the equity of law does but guarantee to them the fruit of their inherited, or recent, rapine. They resemble those childish agreements wherein after having won some marbles, the winners say to those who wish to win them back again, 'That is not fair play.' The sagacity of judges limits itself to differentiating between usurpations which are not fair play and those which were agreed upon in starting, and this distinction is equally childish and thin. Above all, it is arbitrary. The strapping young woman who at this very moment is hanging at the end of a hempen rope, had stolen, you say, a lace head-dress from

Councillor Josse's wife. But on what do you found your belief that this head-dress belonged to Councillor Josse's wife? You will tell me that she bought it with her own money, or found it in her wedding-chest, or received it from some lover—all good ways of acquiring lace. But however she may have acquired it I merely see that she had the enjoyment of it, as one of those gifts of fortune one finds, or loss perchance, and over which one has no natural right. Nevertheless, I own that the lappets belonged to her conformably to the rules of this game of possession, which human society can play as children play at hop-scotch. She valued her lappets, and in fact she had no less right to them than any other. Well and good. It was justice to return them to her, but without putting such a high price on them that for two wretched lappets of *point d'Alençon* a human creature should be destroyed."

"Monsieur," said the little official, "you keep in view but one side of the justice of the matter. It was not enough to do right by Councillor Josse's wife by giving her back her lappets. It was necessary also to do right by the servant in hanging her by the neck. For justice is to render to each what is due to him. In which lies its majesty."

"In that case," said my good master, "justice is

wickeder even than I thought. This belief that she owes punishment to the guilty is ferocious in the extreme. It is gothic barbarity."

"Monsieur," said the little official, "you misunderstand justice. Justice strikes without anger, and it has no hatred for this girl it sends to the gallows."

"A good thing, too," said my good master. "But I should prefer that judges confess that they punish the guilty from pure necessity, and only to make impressive examples. In that case they would merely hold by what was actually necessary. But if they think, in punishing, to give the guilty his due, one sees to what this delicate discrimination will lead them, and their probity itself will make them inexorable; for one knows not how to refuse people what is due to them. This maxim horrifies me, Monsieur. It was laid down with the greatest severity by an able philosopher of the name of Menardus, who pretends that to fail to punish an ill-doer is to do him wrong, and wickedly to deprive him of the right to expiate his fault. He held that the Athenian magistrates had done excellently well by Socrates the sage, and that they worked for the purification of his soul when they made him drink the hemlock. But those are odious thoughts. I ask that criminal justice should tend less to the sublime. The notion

of pure revenge attached more commonly to the punishment of malefactors, although base and bad in itself, is less terrible in its consequences than the overweening virtue of ingenuous philosophers. I knew in former days, in Séez, a jovial and good sort of fellow, who took his children on his knee every evening and told them tales. He led an exemplary life, went to the sacraments and prided himself on his scrupulous honesty in the corn business he had carried on for more than sixty years. Now he happened to be robbed by his servant of some doubloons, ducats, rose-nobles, and some fine gold coins, which he, curious of such things, kept in a case at the back of a drawer. As soon as he discovered this loss he carried complaint to the police, whereupon the maidservant was questioned, tried, condemned, and executed. The good man, who knew his rights, exacted that the skin of the thief should be given to him, of which he made a pair of pantaloons; and he would often smack his thigh and cry, 'The hussy! the hussy!' The girl had taken his gold pieces, he had taken her skin; anyway he had his unphilosophical revenge in all the simplicity of his rustic savagery. He had no notion of fulfilling a lofty duty when he slapped his hand light-heartedly on his garment of human skin. Better is it to acknowledge

that if one hangs a thief it is for prudence' sake, and with the object of frightening the others by his example, and not at all on the philosophical plea for the sake of giving each man his due. For in true philosophy nothing belongs to any one if we expect life itself. To pretend that we owe expiation to criminals is to fall into mysticism of a ferocious description, worse than naked violence and open anger. As to the punishment of thieves, it is a right which has its origin in force, not in philosophy. Philosophy teaches us, on the contrary, that all we possess is acquired by violence or by cunning. And you see also that judges approve of our being deprived of our possessions if the ravisher be powerful enough. Thus it is permitted to the king to take our silver-plate to make war, as was seen under Louis the Great, when the requisition was so exacting that they even took away the fringe of the bed-hangings, to use the gold woven with the silk. This prince put his hand on the goods of individuals and on the treasures of the Church, and twenty years ago, performing my devotions in Notre-Dame-de-Liesse in Picardy, I heard the complaints of an old verger who deplored that the late king had taken away and melted down all the treasures of the church, and ravished even the jewelled breast of

gold, placed there sometime before in great pomp by the Princess Palatine, after she had been miraculously cured of cancer. Justice seconded the prince in his requisition, and punished severely those who hid away any article from the king's commissaries. Evidently she did not think that these things belonged so peculiarly to their possessors that nothing could separate them."

"Monsieur," said the little official, "the commissaries acted in the name of the king, who, possessing everything in the kingdom, can dispose of it to his liking, either for war, or for naval armaments, or in any other way."

"That is true," said my good master, "and that is one of the rules of the game. The judges go about it as in the game of 'goose,' following one another and looking at what is written in the rules. The sovereign's rights, upheld by the Swiss Guard, and by all sorts of soldiers, are written there. And this poor girl, who has been hanged, had no Swiss Guard to inscribe in the rules of the game that she had the right to wear Madame Josse's lace. That is just how it is."

"Monsieur," said the little official, "I hope you do not liken Louis the Great, who took his subjects'

plate to pay his soldiers, to this creature who stole a head-dress to deck herself."

"Monsieur," said my good master, "it is less innocent to make war than to go to Ramponneau's in a lace head-dress. But justice gives to every one what is his, according to the rules of this game played by man, which is the wickedest, the most absurd, and the least amusing of all games. And 'tis our misfortune that every man is obliged to take a hand in it."

"It is necessary," said the little official.

"Laws are also of use," said my good master. "But they are not just and can never be so, for the judge assures to his fellow men the enjoyment of the goods that belong to them, without distinction between the beneficial and the hurtful: this distinction is not found in the rules of the game, but in the book of Divine justice only, wherein no one may read. Do you know the story of the angel and the anchorite? An angel came down to earth with the face of a man and the dress of a pilgrim, making his way through Egypt. He knocked, at eventide, at the door of a good anchorite, who, taking him for a traveller, gave him supper, and wine from a golden cup. Then he made him lie down on his

bed whilst he laid himself on the ground on some handfuls of maize-straw. While he slept his celestial guest rose up, took the cup out of which he had drunk, and, hiding it under his cloak, fled away. He acted thus, not meaning any ill-will towards the good hermit, but, on the contrary, in the interest of the host who had given him such a charitable welcome. For he knew that this cup would have been the undoing of the holy man, who had put his heart into its keeping, whereas God desires us to love none but Him and does not brook that a man, devoted to religion, should attach himself to the things of this world. The angel who had his share of Divine wisdom, distinguished between goods that are good and goods that are not. Judges do not make this distinction. Who knows but what Madame Josse may not lose her soul along with the lappets of lace her servant took and which the judges have given back?"

"In the meanwhile," said the little official, rubbing his hands, "there is now a hussy the less in this world."

He shook the crumbs from his coat, bowed to those present, and went off jauntily.

XXI

JUSTICE (*continued*)

MY good master, turning to me, continued in this manner:

"I only related the story of the angel and the hermit to show the abyss which separates the temporal from the spiritual. Now it is only in things temporal that human justice is exercised, and it is on a low plane where high principles are not in favour. The cruellest offence that could possibly be done our Lord Jesus Christ is to place His image in the courts of law, where judges pardon Pharisees who crucified Him, and condemn the Magdalene whom He raised up with His Divine hands. What does He—the Just One—among these men, who are unable to show themselves just, even should they wish to, because their melancholy duty is to consider the actions of their fellows, not for what they are in their essence, but merely from the point of view of the social interest; that is to say, on account of this mass of egoism, avarice, error, and abuse which go

to the making of cities, and of which they are the purblind guardians. In weighing a fault they add to it the weight of fear or anger it inspired in the cowardly public. And all this is written in their book in such wise that the ancient reading and dead letter stand in the stead of intelligence, heart, and a living soul. And all these regulations, some of which go back to the infamous time of Byzantium and Theodora, agree on this one point only, that all must be perpetuated—virtues and vices alike, in a society which has no desire for change. A fault, in itself, is of so little account in the eyes of the law, and the surrounding circumstances are so considerable, that the self-same act allowable in one case becomes unpardonable in another, as is shown in the instance of a slap in the face, which, given by one man to another appears simply, in the case of a bourgeois, the effect of an irascible temper, but, for a soldier, becomes a crime punishable by death. This barbarity, which still exists, will be our shame in centuries to come. We reck little of it, but one day they will ask each other what sort of savages we can have been to send a man to his death for a generous warmth of blood springing from his heart when he is bound by law to suffer the perils of war and the miseries of barrack-life. And it is clear

that, if there were such a thing as justice, we should not have two codes, one military, the other civil. This military justice, whose results one sees daily, is atrociously cruel; and men, if they ever establish law and order, will never believe that formerly, in times of peace, courts-martial avenged the majesty of corporals and sergeants by the death of a man. They will not believe that unfortunate beings were ordered to be shot for the crime of desertion before the enemy, in an expedition where the government of France itself did not recognise a state of war. What is to be wondered at is that such atrocities are committed by Christian people who do honour to St. Sebastian, a mutinous soldier; and to those martyrs of the Thebian legion, whose sole glory is having, in a former age, incurred the severity of courts-martial in refusing to fight against the Bagaudes. But enough of this, let us talk no more of the justice of these gentlemen of the sword, who will perish one day according to the prophecy of the Son of God; let us return to our civil magistrates.

"Judges search not the reins, neither do they read the heart of man, and their justest justice is rude and superficial. All the more then must they cling to this coarse skin of the law on which the codes

are inscribed. They are men—that is to say weak and corruptible, gentle to the strong, and pitiless to the weak. They sanction, by their judgments, the cruellest social iniquities and it is difficult to distinguish, in this partiality, what comes from their personal baseness from what is imposed on them by their duty to their profession; which duty is, in reality, to uphold the State in what is evil as well as in what is good; to see that public morality remains unaltered, whether excellent or detestable; and to assure the rights of citizens along with the tyrannical desires of the prince, to say nothing of the ridiculous and cruel superstitions which find an inviolable shelter under the lilies of France.

"The most austere magistrate may be brought, by his integrity itself, to decrees as revolting, and perhaps even more inhuman, than those of one who fails in his duty, and I do not know myself, which of the two I should dread the most, the judge who has made a soul for himself out of the text of the law, or he who makes use of a remnant of sentiment to twist the text. The one would sacrifice me to his interests or his passions, the other would immolate me coldly for the written word.

"Again we must notice that the magistrate is the defender, through his office, not of new prejudices to

which we are all more or less submissive, but of old prejudices which are preserved in our laws while they are fading from our minds and our manners. And there is no one of a thinking and liberal turn of mind who does not feel how much of the barbarous there is in law, whereas the judge has not the right to feel this.

"But I am speaking as if laws, clumsy and barbarous as they are, were at least clear and precise. But much is necessary for them to become so. The 'gramarye' of a wizard would be easy to understand compared with many of the articles in our codes and case-law. This difficulty of interpretation has greatly contributed to the establishing of divers degrees of jurisdiction, and we admit that what the manorial court has not understood the Parliamentary gentlemen will make clear. It is expecting a great deal from five men in red robes and square caps, who even after having recited the *Veni Creator* are still subject to error; and it is better to acknowledge that the highest court judges without further appeal, for the sole reason, that the others were exhausted before recourse was had to this. The prince is himself of this opinion, for he has a judgment-seat * above the Parliament."

* The institution styled *lit de justice,* bed of justice.

XXII

JUSTICE (*concluded*)

MY good master looked sorrowfully at the flowing water, an image of this life, where all things pass and nothing changes. He pondered for some time and then continued in a low voice:

"That point is of itself, my son, an insurmountable perplexity to me, that it is needful that justice should come from judges. It is clear that they are interested in finding guilty the man whom they at first suspected. *Esprit de corps,* so strong among them, pushes them to it, and so you may see throughout their procedure how they brush aside the defence as importunate, and only allow it a hearing when the prosecution has donned its arms and composed its countenance, and has, in fact, contrived to assume the air of the Goddess of Wisdom. By professional feeling they are inclined to see guilt in every accused person, and their zeal appears so alarming to certain European nations that, in important cases, they give them the help of twelve

men, drawn by lot. Whereby, it appears, blind chance is a better guarantee of the life and liberty of the accused than can be the enlightened conscience of a judge. It is true, however, that these bourgeois magistrates, drawn by lot, are kept out of the affair, of which they see but the outside pomp and show. And it is also true that, ignorant of the law, they are not called upon to apply it, but to decide merely, in one word, whether it is a case for applying it. It is said that this kind of assize results sometimes in absurdities, but that the nations who have instituted it are attached to it as a kind of very precious safeguard. I willingly believe that. And I understand their accepting decrees given in such fashion, which may be inept or cruel, but at least whose absurdity and barbarity cannot be imputed to one person, so to speak. Iniquity seems bearable when it is incoherent enough to appear involuntary.

"The little official of a moment ago, who had such a feeling for justice, suspected me of taking the side of thieves and assassins. On the contrary, I disapprove so strongly of theft and murder that I cannot endure even the authorised copy of them by the law, and it is painful to me to observe that judges have found no better way to punish rogues and homicides than by imitating them; for in truth,

Tournebroche my son, what is fine or execution, save theft and murder, perpetrated with majestic punctiliousness? And do you not see that, notwithstanding all its splendour, our justice only attains to the shameful revenge of evil for evil, misery for misery; and to the doubling of crimes and sins for the sake of equilibrium and symmetry? It is possible, in the carrying out of this duty, to exercise a certain probity and disinterestedness. One may show oneself a l'Hospital as well as a Jeffreys, and for my part I know a magistrate who is an honest fellow enough. But to return to the principle of the thing, I have wanted to show the true character of an institution which the pride of the judges and the terror of the people, vying with each other, have clothed in borrowed majesty. I have wanted to show the humble origin of these codes they wish to make august, and which are in reality but an odd heap of expedients.

"Alas! laws emanate from man; a poor and miserable origin. They are mostly born of occasion. Ignorance, superstition, the pride of princes, the interests of the legislator, caprice, fantasy—these are the sources of the great body of the law, which becomes worthy of veneration when it is no longer intelligible. This obscurity that envelops

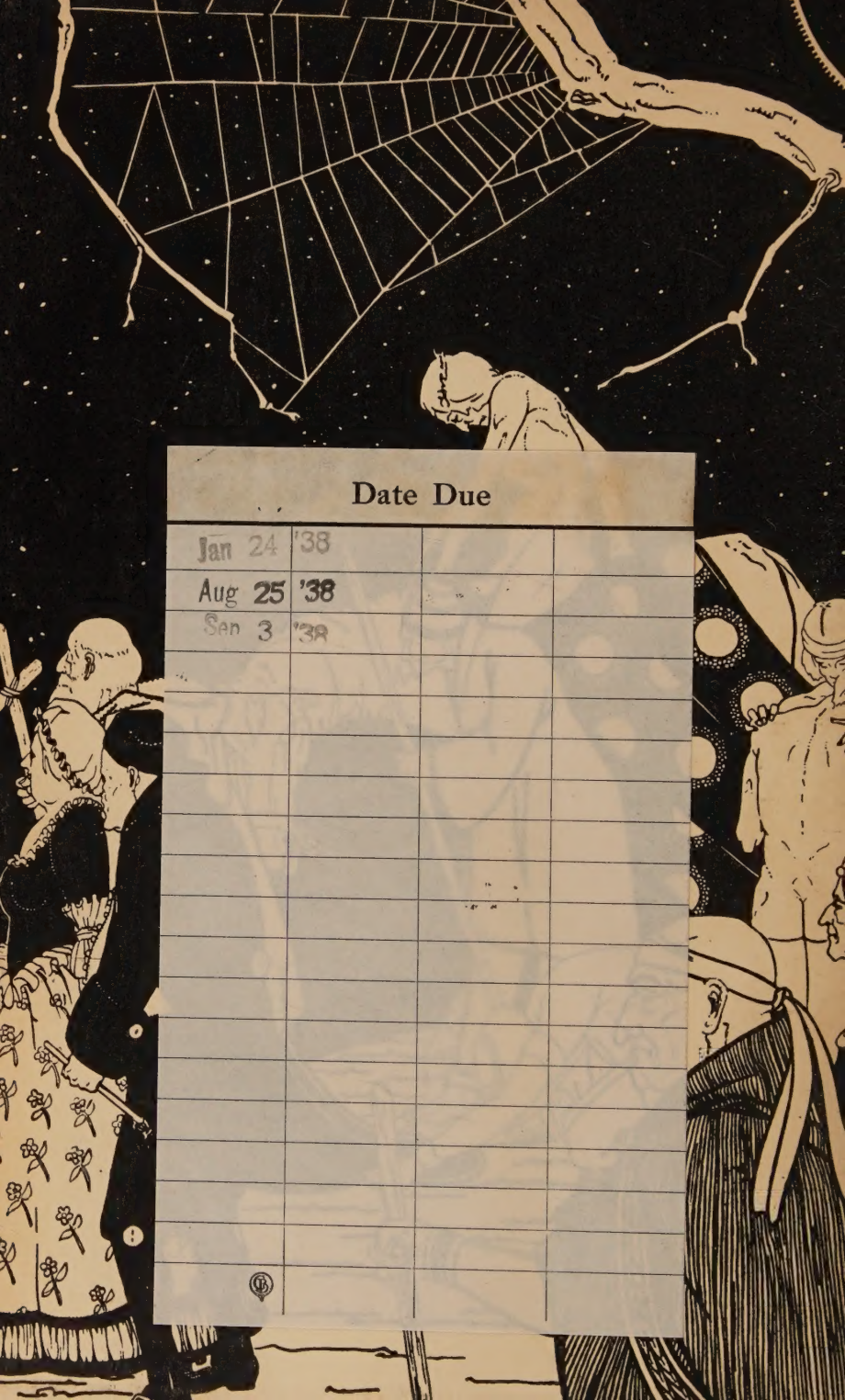
it, thickened by the commentators, gives it the majesty of the oracles of old. I hear on all sides, and I read in every paper, that nowadays we make laws fitting for the circumstance and the occasion. That is the view of the short-sighted, who fail to see that it is but following an immemorial custom, and that in all times laws have resulted from some chance thing. We complain also of the obscurity and contradiction into which legislators continually fall. And we fail to note that their predecessors were equally dense and confused.

"In actual fact, Tournebroche my son, laws are good or bad less by their nature than in the way we use them, and such and such a provision, extremely wicked though it be, does no harm if the judge does not put it into force. Custom is stronger than law. Refinement of manners, gentleness of mind, are the only remedies one can reasonably bring for legal barbarity. For to correct laws by laws is to take a lengthy and uncertain road. Centuries alone undo the work of centuries. There is little hope that a French Numa will meet one day in the forest of Compiègne, or among the rocks of Fontainebleau, with another nymph, Egeria, who shall dictate wise laws to him."

He gazed for long on the hills which showed blue

on the horizon. His air was grave and sad. Then, laying his hand gently on my shoulder, he spoke to me in accents so profound that I was touched to the depths of my soul. He said:

"Tournebroche, my son, you see me, all at once, wavering and embarrassed, stammering and stupid, at the mere notion of correcting what I find detestable. Do not think this timidity of mind. Nothing may give pause to the audacity of my thoughts. But note well, my son, what I now say to you. Truths, detected by the intelligence, will for ever remain sterile. The heart alone can fertilise its dreams. It pours the water of life on all it loves. Seeds of good are sown in the world by the feelings. Reason has no such virtue. And I confess that up to now I have been too reasonable in my criticism of laws and manners. And so this judgment will fall without fruit, and wither as a tree bitten by April frosts. To help mankind one must throw aside all reason as an encumbrance, and rise on the wings of enthusiasm. So long as we reason we shall never soar."



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